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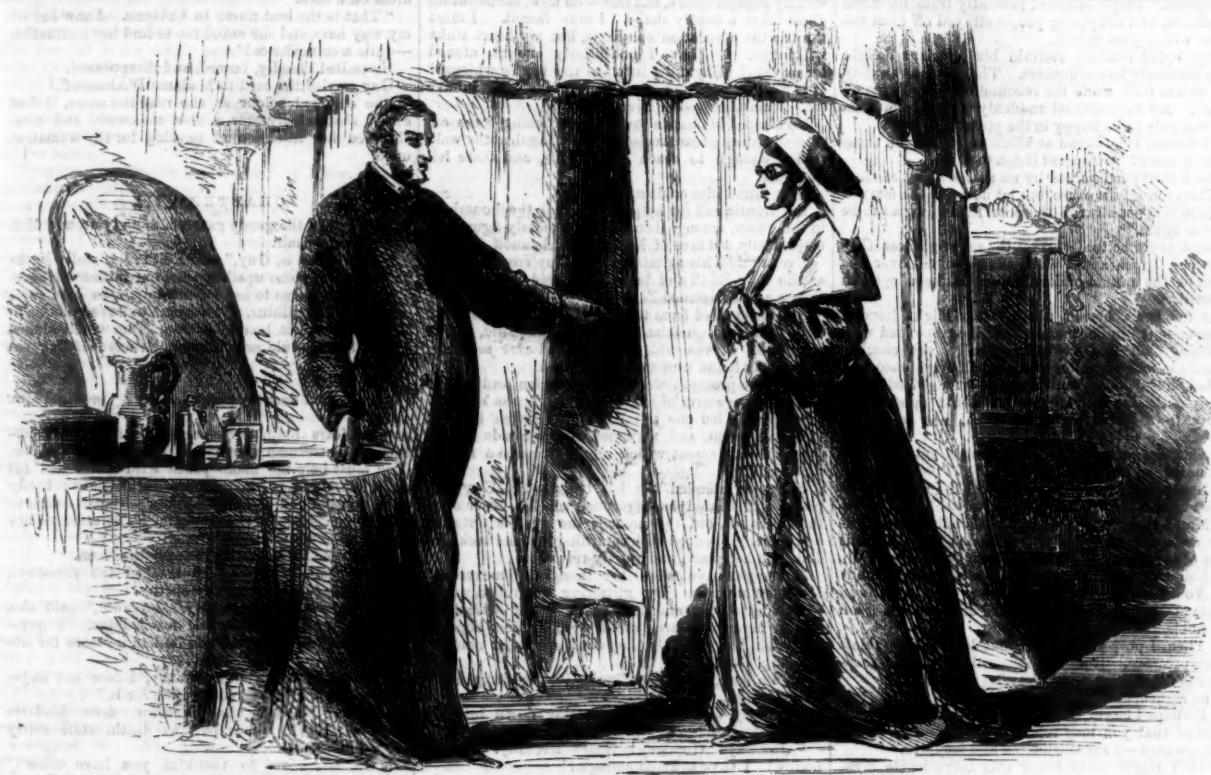
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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[THE NURSE.]

THE FORTUNE-TELLER OF THE RHINE.

CHAPTER VII.

BRIGHTLY gleamed the river, resplendent was the sunshine; charmingly beautiful looked the old town as they approached it once more, with its many-roofed crescent lying close to the sparkling water, as if shaking hands with Deutz by its bridge of boats.

Guy stole a look at his father's face. His eyes were closed, but there was a marble look about the set features which showed the powerful steeling of the nerves to counterfeit calmness.

They drove at once to the hotel. Peter came down to meet them in the court-yard. The rest of the party had left, and gone to private lodgings on the outskirts of the town.

It had been a whim of Mrs. Owen's, who, with the caprice of weakness and convalescence, had declared the residence at the hotel unendurable.

He gave them the address, and they set forth at once.

Guy had feared it would add to his father's annoyance, but on the contrary, he seemed relieved.

It was a tasteful residence, and as they drove through the shaded avenue Guy did not wonder the invalid found the change beneficial.

Edith, extremely astonished at their unlooked-for appearance, came running out to meet them.

"Here are our runaways returned. Who would have thought it? I know how it was—you were stupid company for each other. You missed Aunt Hester's cheerfulness—Ralph's merriment—and my good-nature. Well, you are welcome enough. How pleased Aunt Hester will be! Why, Sir Morton, have you been ill?"

"No, no, my dear, a little used up by continual changing. How is your aunt?"

"Vastly improved; she sits up now for receptions, we call them, and we take her out in the air, Ralph and I; we are an admirable pair of ponies—she'll tell you how we wheel her chair down the walk."

"I must go in and see her," said Sir Morton passed in, in answer to Sarah's salutation.

Edith detained Guy.

A shrewd observer might have mistrusted such ceaseless chattering. Genuine love has not so much word welcome at command.

"And oh, Guy, there's something so odd about it. Only think, the daughter of the lady who owns the house—guess who she is."

"How can I, when my Cologne acquaintance is so limited?"

"Ah, but you have seen her—at least, you know how she looks. We were so astonished. For, you see, when poor annie grew so sick of that room in the hotel, and declared she must go where there was a garden and plenty of green, or she should die, we were at our wits' end. But you know how ready Ralph is. He advertised for a quiet place in the suburbs, and it was answered at once. We know nothing about the people, only we came and examined the house—of course we were charmed; you see how pretty it is. But when we came to see the young lady we were all struck with the coincidence."

"What do you mean, Edie? How long you are getting at your subject. Who is it? at what am I to be surprised?"

"I've a mind not to tell you. No, I won't, to punish you for your uncivil speech."

And away she danced into the house.

Guy followed in perplexity.

Her blue silk dress just disappearing into a doorway was the guide he followed, until he found himself in a sunny, neatly furnished room, where, propped up with pillows, sat Mrs. Owen, with his father by her side.

She was very pale and fragile looking, but wore her old cheerful, steady smile.

"Guy, my dear boy, how I've longed to see you," said she, holding out her hand.

He clasped it warmly, and spreading it out in his own, said, chidingly:

"What a thin, wasted hand, auntie dearest; I shall hurry you up now I have come. Do they take good care of you?"

"To be sure, they are excellent children, Ralph and Edith, and Sarah, you know, is perfection in the nursing line. I have done beautifully since I came here, but that noisy, stifled, crowded hotel was near the death of me."

"I am thankful, then, you have made the change; it is very charming here in appearance."

"And in the experience, too. Madame D'Almanoff is extremely kind, and Irena is very winning; she is like a child of mine already. Oh, yes, we are so happy here, I shall leave reluctantly. But I think, Sir Morton, I shall return to England as soon as my strength permits. I shall hardly be equal to the proposed journey."

"I shall accompany you, Hester; it is too much for me also. If these giddy young people must wander all over the earth, let them be married, and then they will need no chaperonage."

Edith blushed half angrily, and ran out of the room with the excuse:

"I must find Ralph—he will be so surprised. He has gone to find some flowers for my vase."

She returned in a few moments, but not with Ralph. A young girl was her companion, and as Edith—with one arm around her waist—drew her forward, her face was for the moment averted.

When however she turned it modestly towards them, Guy's heart came flying to his throat, and he could scarcely conceal his agitation.

It was Undine herself!

"Our dear Irena, Sir Morton, Mademoiselle D'Almanoff, Guy. You must be as good friends as the rest of us already are," said Edith, earnestly.

The beautiful Irena's cheek was softly flushed and her eyes sparkled archly; but she responded to the introduction to Guy as to an entirely new acquaintance.

Guy was himself too confused to notice the deadly pallor which settled on his father's cheek as his wild glance fell upon that youthful face.

Both Mrs. Owen and Edith were also absorbed in watching for Guy's astonished recognition of the portrait, and Sir Morton had time to recover a little composure, ere he answered her salutation.

Guy soon discovered that she had kept silence concerning their first meeting, and her previous knowledge of him.

His spirits, so long depressed, rose buoyantly, and his brilliancy astonished Edith as much as Irena. Sir Morton sat like one spell-bound; and on the plea of a headache, soon asked to retire to the room he was to occupy.

Madame D'Almanoff did not appear—she was also indisposed. Ralph returned presently from his floral expedition, and the young people strayed off from the house with joyous spirits.

Guy could scarcely restrain his hilarious delight from unseemly boisterousness. The previous anxiety and gloom only made the rebound of his spirits more elastic. All care seemed suddenly lifted from him. He was only to be happy in the present.

"I wonder if he found an elixir anywhere on those inland travels?" whispered Ralph to Edith.

She looked puzzled, but by no means dissatisfied.

"Never mind the cause, but let us enjoy the marvel. Though it is not strange the poor fellow is glad to be with us again."

Ralph could better interpret the eager glances Guy cast upon Irena, and was resolved to discover the secret of the mutual understanding his keen eye had detected.

As for Irena herself, there was a slight trace of embarrassment in her manner. If she responded with a cheery smile to Guy's merry tally, she checked herself the moment after with a half-frightened air, as though she had committed some wrong deed.

Guy noticed it with sorrow, and found opportunity to say in a low tone, which could not reach the others:

"Alas, I perceive that Undine has not yet forgotten that unknown sin of mine."

"Nay, not of yours. Heaven forbid I should be so unjust as that!" answered she, warmly.

"May I cheer myself with the thought that whatever it is which lends a horror to my name, there is none of it reflected upon my individual self?"

"I should be unkind enough to allow you to doubt it. You from whom I have known only grand and heroic acts, of whom I have heard only what is good and noble."

"Then, I pray you, banish that look of uneasiness in my presence. It almost seems that you fear some harm to result from my society."

She sighed, and blushed faintly.

"Perhaps I ought, or rather perhaps I have reason to dread that you may reprimand me hereafter. It is all so strange—I am bewildered and troubled."

"If I might only know this inexplicable mystery!" exclaimed he, impatiently.

"If I might only tell you!" returned Irena, sorrowfully; "pray let us talk of something else."

"Allow me to thank you for keeping silence concerning our previous meeting. I have held it so sacred that not a living soul has heard a word from me in relation to it. It would have been a sore trial to hear Ralph's bantering jests about so sacred a subject."

"I perceived that Edith knew nothing about it, and she is your betrothed."

She fixed her beautiful eyes questioningly upon his face.

He coloured with annoyance, and was half angry, half ashamed of the impulse which prompted him to reply, hastily:

"Yes, our fathers arranged it years ago; Edith and I have agreed to fulfil it, if there be no other attachment for either."

She looked over to Edith and Ralph with a half-smile.

"I was somewhat puzzled, it is explained now."

Ralph at that moment came forward.

"Where is Sir Morton, Guy? I have not seen him yet."

"He was much fatigued, and went to lie down. I had forgotten about it. I must go and see how he is, since Peter is not here."

He went at once to the house.

The little pang of self-accusation would have been far more keen had Guy seen that father when he reached the seclusion of the roomy chamber allotted to him.

His first movement had been to bolt the door, then he began to wring his hands wildly.

"Why, oh, why did I obey that warning letter? The only safety for me was to return to Cologne at once! Alack! it is the safety of the fire itself. Am I lost indeed? I seem to have fallen into the very trap I dreaded. What shall I do, oh, what shall I do!"

He walked frantically to and fro, and then paused again to mutter fiercely:

"I am caught in the net. If I go away at once, they will suspect something wrong, and it will give support to the accursed story they can tell. Good heavens! this girl, who is she? She is the living image of one who, by this time, should have the

added weight of twenty years. Oh, I guess it, I can not doubt who she is; but the mother, the mother, can I face her—can I brave her eye—can I keep off the looks which would ruin me? They will suspect it, all of them. Oh, if I dared confess all, and cast off this terrible load—but the shame, the ruin, the blasted hopes of my poor Guy! No, no! I could not bear it, I must fight on. Would to heaven I had died ere I saw the Rhine at all. Those old days have risen up vividly enough before, but now—oh now, the haunting ghost takes a deadly shape. I must face it. I must throttle the accusation somehow, but my heart sinks within me. Oh, have I not bitterly enough atoned for my sin? Why did I listen to the fiend's whisper? It is too late now. I must walk in the path I have set. I must reap as I have sowed."

He clasped his hands over his throbbing forehead, uttered a deep groan, reeled a moment against the wall, rallied enough to reach the bedside, and there fell prostrate.

Guy found him cold and senseless.

His frantic call for help brought all the household to the room, among them the tall, stately figure and majestic sad face of Madame D'Almanoff.

Even amidst his agitated alarm, Guy recognized her as the lady Edith and he had observed on the public square and christened Zenobia.

She stood aloof from the others, and her mournful eyes wandered questioningly over the pallid, insensible face. It was evident, if she had ever seen him before, she found now no familiar look.

She gave prompt orders for a physician, and sought to soothe the alarm of his relatives. It was she who imperiously led the trembling Mrs. Owen back to her own room, and stationed Edith beside her to quiet the excitement which might occasion a relapse for herself.

She superintended the hot baths which Guy proposed, and chased as vigorously as the latter upon the icy hands, but the moment the eyelids fluttered thickly fierce sentences which were at first hopeless gibberish, but presently they could catch the name.

"Guy, Guy."

"I am here, dear father," said Guy, tenderly bending over him.

He fairly shrieked, and cowering down into the bedclothes, implored:

"Go away! Go away! Spare me, Guy. Mercy, mercy! I have suffered enough!"

Guy drew back with a frightened look.

"His mind is affected. I have feared it for some time. His conduct has been unaccountable ever since we arrived in the German States. Will the physician never come?"

"He lives at some distance," observed Madame D'Almanoff; "he is the only reliable one for such a case, or I would have given directions for speedier help, but, be sure, Hans will bring him as speedily as possible."

By the time the physician arrived the patient's cheeks were flushed a fiery scarlet, and he moaned and shrieked with pain.

"Brain fever, beyond question, though it is just possible we may throw it off."

Guy sighed, and yet it was with relief.

All this strange behaviour of late came, of course, of physical causes. What an immense weight that belief took from him.

"Has the gentleman had any strong excitement of late, any unusual presence of care, or trying bereavement, or anxiety concerning his business affairs?" inquired the physician.

Guy shook his head.

"The only possible cause that I can suggest is the narrow escape we met, a month since, by the explosion of a steamer in which we were coming to Cologne."

"Rather peculiar! That should have produced more immediate effect, according to my ideas. You are sure there is no secret trouble?"

"None that any of his family can imagine," replied Guy, and then, remembering the mysterious paper which had determined their return to Cologne, his misgivings returned, but he did not confide them to anyone.

"He will need utter quiet, only one person at a time in the room. But one to tend him, if that be possible, and I would suggest that you secure an experienced nurse. In such a case as this, the merest blunder of a well-meaning but agitated friend would be fatally injurious."

"His old servant Peter is very dexterous, and we also Peter's wife, who has taken all the care of Mrs. Owen, your other patient."

"They may do, but be sure that their attachment to their master will not affect their firmness."

"I think we may rely upon them."

"Very well; the medicines and directions are yours. I could not write them in English, you perceive I speak it with difficulty. That will be another objection to your servants, we shall find it difficult to understand each other."

"True. I will adopt your suggestion. Can you recommend one?"

The doctor hesitated a moment, then wrote an address on a card.

"That is the best nurse in Cologne. I saw her on my way here, and she asked me to find her a situation—quite a coincidence!"

He smiled blandly, bowed, and disappeared.

Guy carried the card to Madame D'Almanoff.

She changed colour as she read the name, looked away abstractedly for a few moments, and then signified her intention of sending for the woman at once.

CHAPTER VIII

GUY joined the group gathered soberly around Mrs. Owen's easy-chair.

"How sad it is, Guy," said Edith; "it really seems that there is some spell against our farther advance. An evil eye seems to have looked upon us ever since we reached the Rhine, and a decree to have gone forth that we must not leave Cologne. One would almost expect there would presently come some startling revelation."

Guy sighed.

"And what does the physician say?" inquired Mrs. Owen.

"He fears brain fever, and so strongly recommended a German nurse that I have sent for one. You must help me make peace with Peter and his wife. Madame D'Almanoff is with him now; I only came to give you this explanation. I must return to relieve her before he rouses again. The utmost quiet and caution are enjoined."

He turned, as he spoke, to leave the room.

Irena came forward as he reached the threshold, with a face full of earnest sympathy.

"I am so sorry for you, Mr. Mordaunt," said she, "but do not give way to evil forebodings. I questioned the doctor myself, and he had no fears for his life."

"Thank you for your sympathy, I dare not linger now to explain how grateful I am for it."

As he reached the chamber door Madame D'Almanoff, with a face pale as death, stole softly from the bedside.

"Oh, sir, I am so thankful you have come!" whispered she; "he has been perfectly furious."

She did not pause to hear Guy's excuses and apologies for leaving her there, but hurried from the room.

A slight bustle drew her attention, and she passed down the stairs quickly to hush it.

It was the newly arrived nurse, a tall, immensely powerful-looking woman, dressed in a soft gray robe, with a white linen cap over her iron-gray hair, and bright blue glasses over her eyes.

Madame D'Almanoff seized her by the hand—drew her upstairs hastily, but not into the patient's chamber, for she led her into her own private room, closed the door carefully, and in a voice of strong excitement said:

"Mercie, what does this mean?"

"I don't see anything very difficult to read. I have come to nurse the sick Englishman. Dr. D—sent me."

"Mercie, I have yielded too much already. It is indescribable torture to have these people here, his relations. But because you insisted so urgently upon it I consented. I will not blindly follow your commands any farther. You must give me some explanation or I will not send you into that room."

"I don't ask you to send me, Hilda, the doctor has already done it. Don't be absurd and spoil everything. If Irena should recognize me through my disguise, give her a hint to be quiet. She is far more tractable than you, but she has never seen my nurse's costume, and might be startled."

Madame D'Almanoff looked anxious and distressed.

"Mercie, go back and send another nurse, I beg of you."

"I would cut my hand off first!" was the fierce reply. "Did I dodge the doctor's steps for nothing? shall I refuse this most propitious heaven-sent opportunity? I am ashamed of your weakness, Hilda. What distresses you? what do you fear?"

"That you will carry your fierce, implacable hatred even against this innocent sufferer, because he bears that hapless name. I am afraid you will harm him, only because he is a Mordaunt."

Mercie laughed scornfully.

"How little you know me! What a fierce wretch you would make me. I did not expect it of you, Hilda."

Madame D'Almanoff began to weep.

"If you ever confided in me, it would be different; but your strange, wild life—your mysterious movements—your long absences, well may they undermine my confidence."

"And so you cannot have faith in me. Hilda, Hilda, who has cared for you and your child in the bitter years that have gone? Who has toiled early and late, every way, and in all fashions to earn gold to keep you two in comfort? Who has devoted herself, heart and soul and body to your welfare—to avenge your wrongs—to right your grievances? Who has not had a single personal aim for twenty years, but has lived and toiled and planned alone for you and your unfortunate child? And is this my reward?"

Intense bitterness was in the fierce tone.

Madame D'Almanoff flung herself weeping violently, into her arms.

"Forgive, oh, forgive, my Mercie! I know your unselfishness—your generous devotion, but this strange mystery appals and frightens me. And when I remember that terrible vow of yours, I am giddy and sick. If you would only confide your plans to me—"

"And have them upset at the outset! No, no, Hilda, you are not fit for such things. You are for such scenes as I have placed you in, amid the gentle refinements of life—for me are its hard work and rough ways. Let it pass. I complain not—I am content to see you and the child in your natural sphere. And if I spare all the baffling hopes and fears—the ominous clues—the horrible suspicions, until I obtain certainty, ought you not rather to be grateful than to reproach me?"

"Pardon, pardon, Mercie! I am a poor, weak creature—I ought to grovel in the dust at your feet."

"You are my stately, beautiful Hilda, of whom I was always proud, even in my giddiest days. If blind and harm came to my darling I take the blame to myself. I was the elder, I should have guarded you more jealously; I should have pierced behind the fair mask, and discovered the fiend. Oh, my Hilda, if I work and plan strangely, it is all for love of you and the child—to right your wrongs, the wrong my short-sightedness permitted; but trust me a little longer, Hilda; something whispers to me that the glad result is near—the magical clue in my hand."

The two women stood sobbing and embracing.

The nurse was the first to recover composure.

"Now I must go to the patient. You are ready to assist me all you can, I trust?"

"I suppose so. The young man seems much alarmed."

"You mean the son—he who bears the name we shudder to speak?"

"Yes, Mercie."

"He is a noble youth, I have marked him well."

"You have seen him? Why, he only arrived to-day!" exclaimed the other, with astonishment.

The brilliant black eyes behind the blue glasses flashed triumphantly.

"Yes, Hilda, I have seen him. He little guesses it was my work, his abrupt return hither."

"Then he will know you."

"Not he, that is the least of my anxieties. But I like the lad; I mean that he shall marry Irena."

Madame D'Almanoff held up her hands.

"Mercie, you are certainly demented. It is impossible, even if the insuperable obstacles on her side were removed—he is already engaged."

"Yes, to the little blue-eyed Edith, who is so innocently in love with the other Englishman. You can tell me nothing about them, Hilda—I know the whole."

"I believe you are a witch, Mercie."

"So do a great many other people; there's nothing like a quick wit, sharp ears, and watchful eyes, added to a witch's reputation. I assure you it works wonders. Come, let us go to the patient. It is only fair that I should nurse him. I suspect my messages have driven him half frantic. No matter, he deserves it—if—"

She paused with such a fiery look her companion again caught her hands.

"You will not harm him, Mercie, promise me that."

"No, no, it is for my interest that he recovers, be he innocent or guilty."

And thus reassured, Madame D'Almanoff led the way to Sir Morton's chamber.

The lady was fluttered and agitated, but the gray-robed nurse responded to Guy's queries with the utmost coolness.

"Oh yes, monsieur, I can manage him. I am very strong, you see; it is my best recommendation, these stout arms of mine," and she extended them triumphantly.

"I've taken care of many a poor fellow raving mad with fever, and never had any ill-luck yet. But it isn't a good thing to have much talking even in this

next room. You look tired, monsieur; go and rest, and have confidence in me. Maybe the doctor said you could trust me."

"He recommended you very highly, but it is natural I should be anxious. I shall sleep in this anteroom in case of being needed, and when I do not, Peter will relieve me. You shall choose your own hours of being relieved."

"I'll wait till I see how he appears. I'm fresh for the night, at all events. Where's the medicines and the directions?"

Guy pointed them out, saw the new nurse bathing the head in iced water, and really seeming to soothe the restlessness of the patient, and slipped quietly away.

This new illness had very seriously damped the spirits of the party. Even Ralph looked uneasy and troubled. Mrs. Owen had retired quite indisposed, and Sarah was with her. Peter very sulky took his place in the ante-room, according to Guy's instructions. As the latter anticipated, he was extremely indignant at being ousted from his master's bedside by the strange nurse.

Guy threw himself wearily into a chair, and, leaning his head on his hand, sat dejectedly silent.

He was roused by a slight touch on his shoulder. Irena stood there before him, her soft, dark eyes full of wistful sympathy. She placed a tiny tray, holding a cup of coffee and slice of toast, persuasively before him.

"We shall have you ill also, I fear," said she, in that sweet, low voice of hers; "try a little of this, I beg of you. After your wearisome journey, you have not taken a particle of refreshment."

"I had not thought of it," exclaimed Edith, apologetically; "it is very kind of you, Irena."

Guy looked up into Irena's face with a grave.

"Thank you, Undine."

"Undine!" cried Edith, "what a queer mistake, that is not her name."

"Isn't it?" said Guy, while he sipped the coffee. "I rather like it though, and if she has no objection, may fall into the mistake quite naturally."

Irena smiled.

"It does not matter about a name," began she, and then she paused, evidently distressed by some painful recollection, and turning red and pale alternately, added, hastily, "At least, I mean I shall not mind what you call me."

"But there is a condition, if it be my name, no one else must be allowed to use it."

"Just like one of your queer fancies, Guy," observed Edith; "but, Irena, you must honour him as we all do. I'd retort and call him Baudy, if I wore you."

"A fellow who was always up to wicked pranks, plunging unwary travellers into foaming rivers, showering down his water-sprouts, and leaving his victims to perish in them. Will you call me such a name, Undine?" asked Guy.

"Oh, no!" cried Irena, hastily.

"Thank you. I knew you couldn't be so hard-hearted as this little countrywoman of mine. Now, Undine was everything charming, sweet and noble."

"Oh, Guy, she had no soul," exclaimed Edith, triumphantly.

"I beg your pardon—her warm, generous heart earned one for her thrice as pure as that of her scilish, frivolous rival. But we'll not wish for Mademoiselle D'Almanoff such a sad fate. She shall only be the Undine of the forest, not of the castle."

"Oh, Guy, what has become of that miniature? I've promised Irena she should see it. It was so odd. She knows nothing about its loss, says an aunt of hers owned one. Do you suppose you can find it in your trunk, or was it left with the baggage at the hotel?"

Guy laughed a little consciously.

"I think if I search I shall come across it."

"Don't forget it, I want her to see it."

"Let us try the air," exclaimed Ralph, who had been wonderfully silent for him.

"I must take another look at my father. I think the stars are out, Ralph; wait a few moments and we shall have the moon."

He returned from a hasty visit to the sick-room, and they sauntered out upon the lawn.

It seemed tacitly understood that they should walk in couples, and Ralph and Edith led the way.

Thus Guy was left to offer his arm to Irena. They walked in silence a few moments, and then Guy said, mischievously:

"Did you really wish to see the miniature, mademoiselle?"

"I was somewhat curious, but not on account of the likeness, only to trace whence it came."

"I recognized it at once, notwithstanding it was so much brighter in expression than the pale, frightened face of my Undine. And I have kept it with me ever since."

As he spoke he drew forth the narrow black ribbon encircling his neck, and showed to her the likeness suspended to it.

The dimness concealed the glow which mantled her cheek.

"It is singular whence it came," murmured she.

"I can tell you. It was dropped for me by a singular character, I think they call her in Cologne the Fortune-teller of the Rhine!"

"It is very strange!" murmured Irena.

"Do you know the fortune-teller?"

"I—have heard of her," stammered the girl.

"And you have never consulted her?" persisted Guy, resolute to learn if the same prediction given him had been repeated to her.

"No, indeed."

"You speak energetically. Should you object to such a course?"

"Decidedly."

"May I venture to ask why?"

"Because the past has enough of grief, the present of pain, without vexing myself over the future's ill."

"But it may be all sunshine and delight."

"Not for me," was the grave reply.

"Heaven grant your words find a speedy refutation. Surely all gladness and honour and happiness should wait upon your pathway."

She shivered.

"No, no, it is impossible, a blight is upon me; ask me no more, I implore you."

"Oh, for a key to all this mystery!" sighed Guy, inwardly.

(To be continued.)

THE quantity of coffee on which duties of customs were paid in the first six months of this year amounted to 15,832,825 lb, an increase, as compared with the quantity entered for home consumption in the corresponding period of 1865, of 357,149 lb.

A BIG CHEESE.—A cheese has been made at Toronto which measures 6 feet 8 inches in breadth, and 3 feet in thickness; the milk used in its manufacture weighed 35 tons, and was furnished by 800 cows; the weight of the cheese itself in three tons and a half.

THE INDIANS declare that they will never submit to the passage of the Union Pacific Railway through what they declare to be their best hunting-ground. The American Government has offered to support them with rations; but they scout this, and are preparing for war.

SOME of the Italian journals state that a question is at present under consideration for the construction of a railway from Venice to join the network of the Rhine across the Tyrolean Alps. Should this be carried out, the English mail for India, they state, would probably take that route, and be embarked at Venice.

MR HAYWOOD states that it may be computed that there now pass into the city of London daily three-quarters of a million of human beings, and that the same number pass out at night, leaving but its residential or sleeping population of 113,387, and this vast daily influx is equal to one-fourth part of the whole metropolitan population.

SO frightful is the waste, so shameless the prodigality in the Royal Navy, that, as the *Times* says, the Lords of the Admiralty might go out "in a steamer with engines and funnels of solid gold, gold plates of any thickness, gold ordnance, silk awning, ropes, and sails, on a sea of rose-water, with champagne flowing from the very scupper-holes."

THE ancient battlements of the north side of the nave and choir of the Chapel Royal of St. George are, by order of the Dean and Chapter, being replaced with new Bath stone-work by Messrs. Poole, of Westminster, cathedral masons. The old stone piers and ornamental tracery, upon their removal from the roof walls, were found to be in a very decayed and defective state, owing to their exposed position and the action of the weather.

THE NEW LAW ON LEGAL TENDERS.—An Act was passed on the 6th August to enable her Majesty to declare gold coin issued from the colonial branch mints to be "legal tender" for payments in the United Kingdom. And it was stated in several journals that Australian sovereigns could not be refused in payment. The Act provides that a royal proclamation (with the advice of the Privy Council) may be issued on the subject for such times, and on such conditions as mentioned; declaring the gold coins of colonial branch mints to be a legal tender. Until the present time, from the 56 Geo. III., only gold coin of her Majesty's mint was a legal tender, except silver coins to the amount of 40s. It is said, that as branch colonial mints have been, and may be, established, it is expedient by proclamation to declare the gold coins of such establishments to be a "legal tender" in the United Kingdom.

LOVE AND DIAMONDS.

FLORENCE drew from her finger the plain gold ring she had worn for over a year, and tossed it into her work-box with the air of one discarding a worthless thing. Her mother, who observed the act, and understood its meaning, remarked, in a quiet, yet covertly rebuking tone:

"Your father's birthday present."

Florence took the ring from her work-box and restored it to her finger—sighed—bent lower over the fancy needle-work in her hands—but did not answer.

"Annie's father is rich," said Mrs. Howard, "and can afford diamond rings for his daughter; but your father is a poor man, who is giving his life for his children. Early and late he toils, that they may have a pleasant home, food and raiment. He gives them all in his power."

"Why is he not rich as well as Mr. Eckling? He's just as good and a great deal better." There was a rebellious throb in the voice of Florence. "Why should he have to work so hard, while Mr. Eckling can live at ease? I can't understand it, and I don't believe it's right."

"There is a time coming, my daughter, in which you will both think and feel differently," the mother answered. "Heaven is good and wise, and so orders the external things of this life that they shall minister to our highest good. There are things more to be esteemed than jewels—a richer merchandise than houses or lands. Is not love more precious than gold?"

Florence did not reply.

"I happen to know something about Annie's diamond-ring," said Mrs. Howard. "You must be careful not to speak of what I am going to tell you. Everyone can understand how a gift, no matter how costly, may be rendered worthless by the giver, and how a gift of little money value may become priceless. You tossed this plain gold ring aside just now, as though you esteemed it lightly, and yet, when your father gave it to you, he gave his love also. You did not ask him to give you a ring, but love moved him to give you its fitting emblem. It was not so in the case of your friend."

Florence turned her large clear eyes upon her mother. They had a softer expression.

"Annie's ring is fine metal and pure crystal—noting more. Yours is a band of love, warm with the heart's tenderest feelings. I was at B——'s one day last week, and while there two ladies came in—a mother and daughter, as I soon became aware. The daughter was rather gaily dressed, and had a forward manner that was unbecoming, such as too many of our young ladies, who imagine themselves in the best circles, put on. She talked loud, and had a swaggering air—I can find no more fitting word than this, coarse as it sounds. If she respected her mother, she must have been anxious to conceal the fact. My attention was particularly drawn towards her by the wanton indifference with which she treated her companion. Mr. B—— appeared to know them very well."

"I wish to look at diamond rings," said the young lady.

"Mr. B—— exhibited a handsome variety, and the young lady drew one after another on her fingers, holding them up to catch the light and note their brilliancy.

"What is the price of this?" she asked, selecting a large solitaire.

"One hundred pounds," replied Mr. B——.

"Mercy!" exclaimed the mother.

"It is a remarkably fine jewel," said Mr. B——.

"Magnificent!" exclaimed the daughter, opening and shutting the hand on which she had placed the ring, and looking at it with eyes flashing like the gem. I saw that her whole frame thrilled with a kind of greedy excitement. She said something in a low voice to her mother, who instantly replied:

"No—no. You mustn't think of such a thing. He would be very angry."

"Never mind—I can bear that. He'll soon get over it," was the young lady's response. I was pained and shocked. One of the clerks, who heard and understood what her remark meant, shrugged his shoulders, and gave me a significant look.

"No, Annie, I shall not hear of it. If you want a hundred-pound ring your father must be consulted. I shall not take the responsibility," said the mother.

"Then let me take it," answered the reckless, undutiful girl. "I'm not afraid, if you are."

"Annie!" Spoken in rebuke.

"Mother!" In disrespect and defiance.

"She can't have that ring, Mr. B——. Her father would disapprove," said the mother, firmly.

"Then I won't have any!" exclaimed the girl, throwing down the ring, and sweeping from the shop with the stride of an indignant actress. Her mother showed considerable mortification, and after a few

words of apology for her ill-disciplined daughter, went out after her.

"Who are they?" I could not help asking. For the thing was so obtrusively done that all standing near understood the scene.

"Eckling's wife and daughter," was the answer I received.

"Why, mother! did Annie Eckling behave in that way?"

"Just in the way I have told you. And that isn't all. On the next day, as I happen to know, Annie came back alone, and asked to look at diamond rings. Selecting the solitaire her mother had declined purchasing, she directed the bill to be sent to her father.

"The price of the ring is one hundred pounds, you are aware," said Mr. B——.

"Oh, yes—I know the price." And the young lady tossed her head with the air of a half-insulted princess, turned away, and walked off with the ring.

"There'll be a breeze about this," said Mr. B——. "Mr. Eckling will storm like a madman when I send him the bill. Though, if the girl can bear it, I suppose I can. But I hate these things; they're always unpleasant."

"I think we'd better send the bill at once, and have it over," remarked a shopman.

"Yes, send in the bill to-day. The sooner we're done with it the better."

"And the bill was sent in. I don't know what happened at home, but I do know what happened at B——'s on the day following, for I was there when Mr. Eckling came to settle the bill. His face was angry, and his manner excited, as he entered.

"I want to see Mr. B——," he said, with a sharp rattle in his voice.

"Mr. B—— came forward.

"What's the meaning of this?" he asked, throwing down the bill he had received, and looking sternly at Mr. B——.

"It means," replied B——, in a quiet voice, "that your daughter bought a diamond ring, and requested the bill to be sent to her father. Have you inquired of her about it?"

"Inquired of her? Bah!" And he turned away in his excitement, strode half down the shop, and then came back again. I was amazed at his lack of decent self-control.

"I won't have any more of this. One hundred pounds for a ring! They'll have me in the workhouse before I die!" he went on, in blind passion.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Eckling," began Mr. B——.

"No, you're not sorry. You're glad. It's your trade," was returned, roughly.

"I saw Mr. B——'s eyes flash instantly. You mustn't speak in that way here, sir," he said, with a sternness of manner in marked contrast with his former mild bearing. "If you don't wish me to sell your family anything, say so, and I'll govern myself accordingly."

"Mr. Eckling, like all passionate, overbearing men, was cowed by a stern rebuke from an unexpected quarter. He seemed to catch his breath, like one into whose face water had been thrown. Then followed an embarrassing silence. Evidently, Mr. Eckling was beginning to feel a little ashamed. In a half-apologetic tone he remarked, as he took out his pocket-book:

"These things are very annoying. The girl has more jewellery now than she can wear."

"Mr. B—— did not respond, but took the money that was handed to him, and received the bill."

"Good morning," said Mr. Eckling.

"Good morning, sir." And Mr. B—— gave a formal courtesy. As his customer retired, he remarked:

"A glimpse behind the scenes, Mrs. Howard. We have these things occasionally."

"Not often, I hope," was my answer.

"Not often so discreditable to the actors as this. Still, fathers and husbands get very much tried, and sometimes exasperated, over the bills we send in. The temptations that love of display and social emulation bring, are very strong, and many are too weak to stand up bravely against them. I see many beautiful sets of jewels in the street that have histories the wearers might wish to conceal—diamond pins that to my eye tell of heart-ache, and diamond rings that represent anything but love. It is not always that the costliest jewels bring the most delight. I have seen a plain gold ring, a small sapphire, or ruby give more exquisite satisfaction to both giver and receiver than the costliest diamonds we have ever sold. Only last week a gentleman came in with his daughter. He had left a small cameo pin to be repaired, and the call was to get it. The gentleman I have known for

years—not as a customer, for his means do not allow much indulgence in my line—but as a man of refinement and intelligence, and highly respected. His daughter had never before seen, but her purity of face and refinement of manner pleased me. After getting the pin, the gentleman looked down into the case, and asked to see a ring that he

pointed out. It had a ruby setting, and was worth three pounds. "What is the price?" he asked, after placing it on his daughter's finger, and noticing the effect. I knew his circumstances, and understood that the sum of three pounds was more than he would feel it right to give. I looked into the girl's face, into which a beautiful glow was coming, and I could not find it in my heart to shadow its sweetness. I would have given the ring rather than she should not have had it. "Two pounds" was on my lips, but somehow the words "One pound ten shillings" came out. "It is yours, darling." He bent towards her, and spoke in an undertone. "Oh, father!" What surprise, and pleasure, and love were in her voice. I saw her lips also, and her face move towards him, but she repressed the impulse, saying, tenderly, in an undertone, "I'll kiss you when we get home." That modest ruby ring, Mrs. Howard, is more precious in the eyes of that young girl than all the gems in Miss Eckling's jewel-case.

"I could relate many similar incidents," continued Mr. B——; "they are of frequent occurrence. We see a great deal of human nature, madam."

"Too much of it on the shadowed side," I remarked.

"We always see enough of the shadowed side, look where we will, Mrs. Howard," he replied. "But I think we see quite as much of the brighter side of human nature as others. A genuine desire to give pleasure prompts to the purchase of a large amount of the goods we sell. Husbands get beautiful things for their wives; fathers for daughters; and brothers, sisters, relatives and friends for each other. I can always tell when the gift is to be a heart-gift, or from compulsory motives—whether it is free or constrained. Too often the purchaser cannot help himself; he buys a watch, a pin, a ring or a bracelet, because he has been worried into it, or wishes to make a peace-offering.

"Speaking of heart-gifts," he went on, "recalls an incident that made its impression on me at the time. Two gentlemen, whose wives happened to be friends, came in at different times during the same day, and each bought a present for the "elect lady at home." Their circumstances were not equal, and the articles purchased were of different values. One selected a very elegant set, comprising bracelets, car-rings and breast-pin; the other a small pin, of very chaste pattern, encircled with pearls. On the next day the two ladies came in together. On the throat of one I saw the modest pin; in the hand of the other, as she drew it from her pocket, was the morocco case containing her husband's present, which he had hoped would give her so much pleasure. "My husband bought these here yesterday," said the latter, in a tone not marked by any grateful feeling towards the person referred to, but rather annoyance at his failure to please her taste, or whim, as you may please to call it; "but they are not just to my mind, and if you will let me change them for something else, I will esteem it a particular favour." I acquiesced, and after looking through the cases of jewellery, she selected another set, different in style, but in my view nothing like so fine. "What will your husband think?" asked her friend. "Oh, he won't care, so I'm pleased," she answered, lightly. Then, after a pause, she said—"Why don't you change that old-fashioned pin? Mr. B—— will let you select something more to your taste." I saw the calm eyes of her friend light up instantly; her face had a beautiful glow as she replied—"I would not change it for the costliest pin in Mr. B——'s shop. It is my husband's gift, meant to give me pleasure, and that makes it more precious in my eyes than if every pearl were a diamond!" I looked at her in admiration, and it was on my lips to approve the sentiment she had uttered; but as that approval would have covered a rebuke for her companion, I forbore. So you see, Mrs. Howard, we have many opportunities for observing human nature, and look a little deeper into the characters of the people we meet than some of them suppose."

Florence sat in silence for some time after her mother ceased speaking, with her eyes on the floor.

"Would you exchange that simple gold ring, my daughter, for the diamond of Annie Eckling, if it brought for you the same relation to your father that she holds to hers?"

"Oh, mother! how can you ask the question?" exclaimed Florence, starting up, and throwing her arms around her mother's neck. "No—no—no! I would not give my father's love for the costliest diamond in the land. Dear father!" And she kissed the ring he had given her. "How ungrateful I have been! Don't tell him about this, mother. I would not have him know it for the world. It would turn his heart from me."

"Your father's heart cannot so easily be turned from his child," answered the mother. "But do not let this give you concern. He shall never know how your love has been tried, though I should like to tell of its triumphs."

J. S. A.



[VIVIAN'S WIFE FINDS JEROME HER MATCH IN CUNNING.]

THE WRONG DRESS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"The Golden Mask," "The Stranger's Secret," "Man and His Idol," "The Warning Voice," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XLIV.

CAUGHT IN A TRAP.

Fair words as e'er by maiden's ear
Were meekly, blushing, heard,
And yet there's something in my heart
Forbids the answering word.

Sereniss Ballad.

I HAD been entrapped.

The conviction came upon me in a hot, blinding flush, partly of alarm, partly of indignation.

At the sight of the treacherous Gasparo—the hateful being of whose detestable practices I knew but too much—it flashed upon me with lightning vividness that the letter was a forgery, and it had been sent with the express purpose of beguiling me from my home and into the power of my enemy, the extent of whose treachery and wickedness I had no means of estimating. In my mind, excited by fever, the man Gasparo was simply a monster who would hesitate at nothing—not even at the lives of those victims unfortunate enough to fall into his power.

Stay!

Was it a forgery?

The imitation of Violet Maldon's hand, if an imitation, was admirable. Anyone might have been deceived by it.

Seizing this, and knowing what I did of the past, the question forced itself upon me, whether, after all, she had not written that letter? Under compulsion and as the result of force, no doubt; but still, had she not written it?

If she had, there was at once a clue to her sudden and mysterious disappearance. The mystery which attended the first communication might perhaps be accounted for in this way. She might, like myself, be the victim of treachery and mystification. She might once more have fallen into Gasparo's power, and if so, the arts in which the Italian was an adept might again have been brought into use. For all I knew, the lovely being on whom I had once looked with the awe natural to us as we regard the dead, might be within this building, unconscious of her condition and powerless for escape.

If not—if Violet were not there and the letter were not a forgery—then my being enticed there was with a view to some mischief contemplated towards myself.

Dan, it seemed natural to imagine, had accidentally

seen me at the window, and so discovered my retreat. He had, to all appearances, entered the service of a congenial master, one to whom such a stolid, imperturbable, unscrupulous being would be invaluable, and this might be one of the first great services he had rendered.

What then was the object in view with regard to myself?

That nothing to my advantage was contemplated was pretty certain; but what?

The terror that had grown up within me during the last day or two—the terror of the deadly intentions of Gasparo's daughter, Jacintha, appeared here to receive something like confirmation. It might be that I entered that house with my life in my hand, and with nothing but the goodness of an over-ruling Providence to confide in.

What I have here set down at length did not occupy a second in occurring to my mind. In a flash, I have said, I recognized my position and took in all the circumstances attending it. While I stood face to face with my old enemy, and his sinister eyes looked me through and through.

Surely he had grown more hideous, more hateful than ever during the years that had elapsed since our last meeting. His oily, unwholesome skin seemed to have acquired a deeper tinge—a greenish-yellowish hue, like that of some loathsome reptile—and that terrible mouth, on which nature had bestowed no shape, was looser, more repulsive, and with a stronger dash of cruelty in it than when I had last seen it.

He was the first to speak.

"Come in," he said; "we are all friends here." I hesitated.

"Is—is Violet here?" I asked, timidly.

"Surely, oh yes, she is coming," he answered, and as he did so, he exchanged a warning glance with Dan, who stood by my side and nodded—his usual contribution to any conversation.

Having given me my answer, Gasparo, who certainly was not disposed to encourage conversation, turned and led the way through the door from which he had emerged.

I might have hesitated to follow him, but Dan had received his cue, and came so close upon my heels that he compelled me to move forwards.

The room was a small one, but was pleasantly furnished. In the centre was a table covered with books and papers. Near it an easy-chair, from which the old man had evidently risen on my arrival.

He now resumed his seat.

As he did so, I saw that the room had one other occupant.

In a great chair near the fire-place—there was no fire, but the chair seemed drawn up by habit, as if it had been mid-winter—there sat a young man, a stranger to me, who half rose and made an awkward bow as I came in.

Heaven knows how it was I came to the conclusion that his presence there was connected with my coming, and that he awaited me.

Such, however, was my idea, and this induced me to give him a second look.

He was a big, stalwart fellow, with a ruddy face and light fluffy hair; young, not over twenty, I thought, with gray eyes, a large mouth, and the first indications of manhood in a light down on his cheeks, which, seen in one light, constituted whiskers, while in any other light, the down itself was invisible.

The dress of this individual carried out the impression of his face and bearing gave rise to—namely, that he was from the country, probably occupying the position of a young farmer there.

As soon as Gasparo had seated himself and Dan had retired, the former sat supporting his elbows on the arms of his chair, and, pressing the tips of his fingers lightly together, gazed intently at me.

"Upon my word," he then said, "you have grown—wonderfully grown! Quite a woman, I declare! And a very charming woman, too—eh?"

The latter inquiry was addressed to the young man at the fire, who thereupon smiled, showing a double row of white teeth and plenty of gum, and replied:

"Uncommon!"

"By the way," said Gasparo, hastily, "permit me to introduce you"—he was addressing me—"to my young friend, Abel Dorner, a young agriculturist, who is about to depart, with every advantage in life, to try his fortunes in that delightful Arcadia of virgin nature—New Zealand."

I inclined my head.

As I did so, it occurred to me as significant that while the stranger was introduced to me, I was not introduced to him. Clearly he knew who I was and expected me.

"I have been expecting my daughter, Jacintha, your old friend," Gasparo resumed, "but she does not come. Perhaps matters of importance have delayed her. But then, I daresay, we shall get on very well together without her."

"And Violet—" I began.

He waved aside the question with his hand.

"Let us get to business first," he said, with some impatience.

"Business?"

"Why, yes, to a young person of your sagacity it must be pretty clear by this time that you were not induced to come here without an object. It is unnecessary for me to recapitulate all that has happened at Gorewood Place—pray do not interrupt!—Two points, however, it is necessary to direct your attention to. The first is, that under all the circumstances of the case, there is a young person—"

He looked hard in my eyes.

"There is a young person whose presence at Gorewood is most undesirable."

"I understand," I said, gasping down my chagrin.

"Whose presence there," he continued, "must be productive of annoyance, and might be attended with danger to the interests of all—of none more so than our dear Oliver."

I sighed and hung my head.

"Were I not fully informed of the state of this young person's affections," he resumed, modulating his voice to a fatherly tenderness, which affected me even more than the words spoken, "I would never have ventured on what I am about to say. That she wished Oliver well, I am sure; that she would be prepared to make sacrifices for his sake, I have very little doubt—as little as I have that Oliver would refuse to accept those sacrifices were he personally consulted. He has a free, noble, manly heart, and he would say, 'No! I will resign all, but I will not accept anything of all you offer as the price of suffering or trial on the part of one who loves me.' Those would be his words."

"Yes, oh yes!" I exclaimed, eagerly.

"Good! And so I get to the second point. Being so proud, so noble, so chivalric and finding himself bound by a sort of promise—tie—what shall I call it?—to this young person, why, under ordinary circumstances, nothing, as you well know, would induce him to break his promise or swerve from his word."

"Nothing—nothing would induce him."

"You admit that?"

"Oh, yes, most fully."

"You are convinced of it? I am glad of that, because in what I am about to propose to you I wish you to act entirely upon your own convictions, not on mine; entirely of your own free will, and not by my persuasion. Now, think a moment—Oliver's position is a strange and difficult one; he has undertaken a part—"

"At my solicitation," I interposed.

"True—a part full of danger; and he is beset by spies, and ready at any moment to fall into pitfalls, one consequence of which would be not only his own ruin but that of those who by this act he has consented to save from exposure and ruin."

I saw, dimly, to what this was leading, but held my breath in the intensity of my desire to hear more.

"Now," resumed the insidious Italian, still so smoothly, and with such fatherly warmth, "knowing what you do, is it your opinion that his task would become more or less difficult, that his danger would be increased or diminished, were he to follow the dictates of his nature and keep his word in respect to the young person we have mentioned?"

I had no power of reply.

"The keeping of his word meant—marriage," he continued. "Do you think it would facilitate what he has undertaken if he drew attention to himself and his surroundings by selecting as his bride a lady unknown and unrecognized, of no family; seeing that she has relinquished all her claims to recognition, and yet bearing so strong a family likeness to himself that it would of necessity excite remark and inquiry—and you know what inquiry may disclose?"

"Your words terrify me," was my only answer.

"I hope not," he said, "because I wish to be calm and collected. Your position is, I own, a sad one, and since you are paying the penalty of others' misdeeds, sad it must remain, unless you selfishly 'indicate your own rights at their expense. Rights? do I say? You have in truth no rights—nothing but your share as an accomplice in a conspiracy which—well, about which the less we say the better."

"All this," I interrupted, "leads to some objection you are about to propose some course of action to me?"

"True."

"In heaven's name, then, let me hear it. Whatever it is I can scarcely hesitate. I am too wretched, too much the curse of all to whom I would be a blessing to care what becomes of me. What is it you ask?"

"One more act of heroism—one more step to place Oliver in the position you would see him occupy, and to secure the perfect safety of those devoted to you."

"Go on; I listen."

But he hesitated, and his eyes wandered in the direction of the young man who occupied the chair beside him.

"It would be better—" he began.

To this, however, the person indicated violently interposed.

"Hang it, no; leave nothing to me!" he exclaimed, with a broad country accent.

"But, my dear Abel—"

"You won't 'dear' nothing out o' me," returned the blunt young farmer.

"Why, surely you're man enough to do your own courting?"

"Courting!"

I echoed the word in a tone of repugnance.

"Well, it amounts to that," Gasparo returned. "I have explained to you that my young friend Dorner is about to emigrate to one of the sheep-lands of New Zealand. In that new sphere of enterprise it is necessary to him to secure a wife—"

"A real good one, you know," interposed the charming youth by way of hint to me.

"And it has occurred to us that if you could find it in your heart to accept a young, likely, well-to-do husband, with such a future before him, it would secure your own happiness, while it would put the safety and the interests of those to whom you are so attached beyond all question. What do you say?"

"Ah! what d'ye say?" Abel Dorner mustered up courage to repeat.

Crushed by the suddenness of the proposal, and by the show of reason that was in it, I had no power of connected thought or reflection.

That this scheme—concocted by Jacintha, I had no doubt—was most hateful to me, I felt strongly enough; that the red-faced, gray-eyed, large-mouthed, fluffy young farmer was the most detestable person I had ever seen, I felt strongly; but on the other hand, there was reason in the proposal.

What misery it might defeat!

From what danger and perturbation it might save me; and as to Oliver—I saw now for the first time how infinitely his position would be improved if by this one act of magnanimity and self-sacrifice I gave him perfect freedom, releasing him from all obligation, and leaving him free to avail himself of all the resources of his new position.

Yes, my judgment urged me to comply; but my heart—oh, how it sickened and revolted at the bare prospect of exchanging Oliver for this gross lump of humanity.

I struggled hard, how hard I cannot express in words, to gulp down the feeling that was rising in my throat with a choking intensity.

"It is better that I should retire from the struggle with fate, in which, single-handed, I sustain an unequal part—better for myself, for Oliver, oh yes, yes, better for all! Let me consent then. These people can have no antipathy—no enmity or revengeful feeling; their only object is to serve themselves, and he whom I would die to serve. Let me consent then, and all will be well."

So I argued in the moment's pause for reflection permitted me.

And so strong was the feeling of the moment that I might have assented—I was on the verge of yielding, and should have done so; but for a trifling incident.

It was this.

Abel Dorner, seeing me quiet and reflective, apparently disposed to entertain his suit, yet hesitating, as if some stronger inducement were needed, slowly rose from his seat, and, advancing, threw himself on one knee, in the most approved romantic manner, then seized my hand and, without a word, pressed it to his lips.

That decided me.

The touch of those lips thrilled me like the touch of a reptile. I shrank back with a cry, and all my resolutions melted into air. The prospect of becoming the wife of a man towards whom I felt no particle of esteem or regard—to say nothing of love—filled me with an inexpressible loathing.

"Pray leave me," I exclaimed, avertting my face.

"Leave you!"

He uttered the words in a tone of surprise and disappointment, which even in that moment I felt to be amusing.

"I can never be yours," I said.

"Love will come afterwards," he said.

"No; impossible!"

"Oh, yes. Lor' bless you! I haven't seen you ten minutes, and I love you like—like a sister!"

I shook my head.

"I appreciate your kindness," I said, "but I could never be to you what a wife should, and—in short, it is useless to pursue any farther a subject that is most distressing to me, since on this point I am inflexible."

The young man sighed deeply, then turning to Gasparo, who had resumed his pen, and was writing at the table, he said, in an injured tone:

"You hear her?"

"Ay, ay, I hear her," the Italian replied, with a smile.

"She refuses me!"

"They all do so at first. You wouldn't have her jump at you as a fish at a bait, would you?"

"But she declares she never—"

"Nonsense! You don't know what a woman's 'never' is worth. You're young and impatient. You must give her time to think over your offer, and compare it with others."

"Others?"

"Why, yes, to be sure. Don't you know that women keep a record of their offers, just as carefully as a tradesman keeps his books? They set one against the other, compare advantages and drawbacks, and, at last, strike a balance in favour of the man whose position is best in every respect. That's the man they set themselves to love!"

Disgusted at this base calumny against my sex, I burst forth:

"Woman's love is influenced by no such considerations. It is a power that springs up in her heart unbidden, planted by heaven, nourished by its sunshine and its dews, ay, even by the storms which, while they test its strength, lend it vigour and the power of endurance. Before such a passion, all earthly considerations fall into nothingness; it is alike regardless of consequences and obstacles. It is absolute and it is undying."

As I spoke, my eyes flashed, my cheeks glowed, and my bosom heaved. I was eloquent because I felt in my heart the sentiments to which I gave utterance.

Even Gasparo listened with admiration, though his lip curled with an affected sneer.

"One would think you had experienced the feeling you describe with so much animation," he said.

My manner instantly changed, the love of my life—the love for Oliver, nestling in my heart as a bird in its secret nest—was all the dearer and purer to me because it was nourished in secret, and my cheek flushed crimson at the bare idea that my secret might have been surprised.

And no word in answer to the suggestion escaped my lips.

Perhaps the Italian's purpose was answered in having suggested his knowledge of what was passing in my breast, and he did not follow up his remark.

"Well, well, I daresay your young friend Violet will be here by this time," was all he said.

Then stretching out his hand, he touched a bell, which resounded sharply through the room.

Instantly the door was opened and the imperturbable Dan appeared.

"Has the lady arrived?" Gasparo asked.

Dan grinned until his horse-teeth were visible from ear to ear, and nodded.

Then at a signal from his master I followed him from the room, the Italian rising and saluting me as I passed out: his companion also rose, but said nothing.

A few steps along a gloomy passage brought us to a room in which a lamp was burning. Dan stood aside to let me pass in, and as I entered closed the door after me.

The lamp faintly illuminated the room, which was large and gloomy, with little furniture and that of a heavy and cumbersome description.

Eagerly I glanced around me in search of the angelic face I expected to meet; but Violet was not there.

The room was empty.

Stepping back in alarm, I had some idea of opening the door, to ask how this was; but to my surprise I found that there was no handle or apparent fastening.

The door, in fact, closed with a spring.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE FRAY.

Onward and onward still they came:

His eyes were bright as coal of flame:

"Nay," quoth the youth, "this may not be,

All against one is not chivalry."

Sir Gawain.

But what, during this time, had happened at Gorewood Place?

Everything there had pointed to a crisis.

The post reminds us how the "best-laid scheme o' mice and men gang aft agley," and, surely, never was a stronger illustration afforded of the truth of this than in the turn which affairs had taken at Gorewood!

Nothing could have been happier or more adroit than the manner in which Jacintha had check-mated the Vivian Gowers by the introduction of Oliver as Sir Anselm's son and heir. It was a stroke of genius. Seeing farther than her employers—the baronet and his lady—she had from the first suspected treachery on the part of their enemies, and had even guessed that it might take the form of a pretended death, so as to throw them off their guard.

Thus suspicious, and constantly on the watch, she had been the first to hear of the arrival of the foe in the camp, though he had not suffered the grass to

grew under his feet, and had then watched the opportunity for a prompt and decisive movement.

In this way she had defeated the others, clever as they were, and had installed Oliver—whom she always had protected and patronized, it might be from the cause suspected, namely, that he was her son—in an enviable position under the baronet's protection.

Singular was the position the handsome lad had thus enjoyed!

Nothing but the direst necessity on the part of Sir Anselm and his lady could have induced them to take him into their household and treat him as their son, in place of their real offspring. More especially is this true of Lady Gower, who might fairly be supposed to find an additional objection to the plan in the fact that it was the *protégé* of the detested Jacintha towards whom she was thus expected to play a mother's part.

However, palatable or not, the scheme was adopted—the deception was practised, and it was impossible to retract from a position which promised at least security.

Promised! Yes; but the promise was of brief continuance. Like the buds of early spring—what looked so bright and glowing was destined to be nipped by an unexpected frost.

The appearance of Jerome on the scene was wholly unexpected.

A word from him in recognition of Oliver as the lad he had reared, and where would go all the fiction of his early years, his school-days, and the happiness which Lady Gower feigned so well on welcoming him once more to the paternal home!

Almost any human being might have come to Gorewood with impunity except this man, Jerome.

And this man had come there!

He had come, too, at the critical moment, when the Vivian Gowers were on the spot, and when their sharp eyes had been able to detect that he was in possession of information sufficient to give him mastery over the baronet, and to secure his freedom in a case of serious suspicion.

It was unfortunate.

Sir Gower thought so, and cursed his evil stars as he saw the thin little, faded, wasted, but sharply cunning and vindictive woman making through the crowd towards the discharged prisoner.

He would have put out his hand and detained her had he dared, but that was impossible.

"She will question him," he thought, "and all will be over."

And while this passed through his mind, they met: the lady held out her hand to the convict, who received it with a smile and a bow, which were returned with gracious courtesy. The lady could be polite to excess when she had a purpose to serve; her manners were those of a princess when she chose, and it was when most polite that she was most dangerous.

They met, I have said, and Vivian's wife, smiling blandly, drew Jerome aside.

"Can you spare me a few minutes?" she asked.

"With pleasure."

And they walked away together.

"There is some mystery in connection with what has just happened," said the lady, by way of opening the conversation, "which you can hardly expect to pass unchallenged."

Jerome only showed his white, handsome teeth.

"The more so," she proceeded, "as I am convinced that it forms part of that other mystery which you and I talked over when some years ago we met under far different circumstances."

She glanced at his smart clothes and handsome jewellery, and Jerome, following her significant glance, smiled again.

"You ask me for the history of my life?" he demanded. "Is that so?"

"Only as far as it relates to matters in which I am deeply, vitally interested. We met at Ravenna in a critical juncture of my life: we met no more for years, and I find you in extreme poverty, and you ask of me a loan, accompanying the request with words of peculiar significance. When next we meet you have the appearance of a gentleman well to do, if not in affluent circumstances. This is strange!"

Jerome did not feel it necessary to explain that his present sunny condition arose from his share in the plunder of Violet Maldon. He simply remarked:

"It is only another illustration of the fickleness of fortune!"

"Exactly, and I should have no right—perhaps I have no right—to comment on the subject, only, from first to last, in all these changes, I find you in connection with my relatives—with Sir Gower and his lady, and more especially with the person whom we once supposed to be your wife, but whom you, in your poorer days, were eloquent in denouncing."

"If you refer to Jacintha," said Jerome, "any denunciation I might have indulged in was fully deserved."

"No doubt, but—excuse me—you do not answer

my questions? You do not proffer any information?"

"That may be because I do not quite gather what it is madame would know!"

"Indeed! You have forgotten, then, the suggestive words you addressed to me in the room of the old house in Smithfield?"

"Indeed! no, I have forgotten nothing."

"Not your allusion to a time when you might have it in your power to repay me the trifling service I then rendered you, a hundred fold?"

"No."

"Perhaps I was wrong if I associated that promise with what has happened in connection with the other—I may say the opposition—branch of my family; perhaps it was only a delusion on my part when I associated what you then promised with what I supposed you to know of our affairs?"

"You were not wrong—"

She interrupted him.

"Am I wrong now when I associate the words you then used with the scene I have just witnessed—with the young person through whom you have been set at liberty?"

"You are a clever tactician, madame," the man replied, "but you do not understand me, or your knowledge of human nature is a little weak on the point on which it ought to be strongest—that of self-interest."

Was there a covert satire in this?

The lady thought so, and an indignant flush crimsoned her wan cheek.

"When you came to me and relieved me in my difficulties, I was poor, spleenetic, full of rancour against a woman who had used me ill—though, heaven knows, poor wretch, I had tried her hardly enough—and I was disposed to be reckless—and grateful. Things have changed with me; and I can afford to regard with a pitying smile both of those foolish conditions of mind. Recklessness is the greatest folly of life—except gratitude."

Even in her anxiety to win him to her own uses, Vivian's wife regarded the speaker with repugnance.

Thorough selfishness, thorough callousness and hardness is always revolting. There is no creature so detestable as the man who works on the cold and deliberate promptings of a cunning brain, and whose heart never sways his judgment in the slightest degree.

It is so natural for men to be influenced by their feelings and sympathies—to swerve even from the dictates of their judgment, as they are prompted by tenderness and commiseration, by honour, and what we term manly considerations, that where we meet a being acting in pure selfishness, we naturally shrink from him as from a monster.

Such a man was Jerome.

And the feeling of repugnance on the part of Vivian's wife was fully justified.

"If I understand you," she said, "you repudiate what you then promised?"

"Because, what was then valueless to me has become of value. You see, things are changed. Did you not witness with your own eyes that I have power over Sir Anselm Gower, and power means money, position, influence, all that I covet and will possess?"

"In other words, it is a question of terms?"

"Admirable! my dear madame, you are a born diplomatist. It is a question of terms."

"You offer yourself to the highest bidder?"

"Bravo! You are a Machiavelli! What an intellect!"

"On certain conditions you will support Sir Anselm in his infamous—"

"Madame! madame! This is not diplomatic."

"In his ingenious device for securing his present position."

"Better! much better!"

"But should you see your way to improved terms?"

"Exactly! I cannot sufficiently admire your penetration and discernment. You have read my character and my purposes to a nicely. Unquestionably a fine mental organization, that of yours, my dear madam."

The lady turned aside, a little impatiently.

"There is one question," she said, looking into his face and hesitating, "that I would fain ask. Yet I can hardly hope for an answer."

"A question is soon asked," returned Jerome.

"True; but this—in short, I would know what knowledge you have of the antecedents of this lad—this young man who suddenly appeared at Gorewood as the baronet's son?"

Jerome smiled.

"Really, as I have said," he returned, "your diplomatic talents are of a rare order. You would ask that—only that? And that is only the key to the enigma! Permit me, madam, to wish you a respectful adieu."

He raised his hat from his head, and bowing, turned

and left the building with a light skipping step, muttering to himself as he went, "Delightful! The charming old cat! The delicious Jezebel! She only wants my secret—only that—and I may go hang. Ha! ha!"

In the midst of his joyous outburst the Italian's face changed, and he hesitated.

On his way out he had suddenly come upon the open green fronting the house, and this, to his dismay, was crowded with people, who regarded him with no friendly looks, and among whom his appearance was the signal for a noise that sounded like a menacing groan.

Jerome was suddenly facing that ordeal from which men of his stamp always shrink, namely, public opinion.

His acquittal had given great dissatisfaction. It was so clear that he was the companion of a man who had been guilty of an act of violence; moreover, it was so obvious that up to a certain point Sir Anselm Gower had it in contemplation to detain him on suspicion, at least, till the missing man, Albany Seymour, was forthcoming, that the public could not understand this abrupt change of policy. They did not believe it was due to fair-play, but to some underhand or sinister influence, and this they now hastened to express.

Besides, Sir Anselm was not popular. The sealed life he led—the strange tales circulating respecting the means by which he had attained his present position—above all, the influence of Jacintha, who was universally hated, caused him to have very little hold on popular affection and regard.

And here was a glorious opportunity of giving expression to this feeling in an indirect way.

Foolishly for himself, Jerome resented this, and in ignorance of one or two far from complimentary remarks, returned others which showed that he was in a position to carry things with a high hand, and which greatly exasperated the crowd.

"Who is he?" demanded one.

"What does he do in these parts?" asked another.

"And his friend? Where's his friend with the pistol?"

"You'd best keep a civil tongue in your head, my friend," retorted Jerome, "or you'll make a closer acquaintance with my friend and the pistol than you'll care about."

"Hear him!" cried the man, "you hear him Threatened to shoot me! And this is the man that's suffered to go at large."

Groans and hisses followed, and in the midst of it a voice suddenly cried out, and a man shouldered himself to the front.

"I know him!" said the man.

He had formerly been a servant at Gorewood, and had been discharged for some trifling cause.

"Listen to me; I know him," repeated this fellow, who was little, red, and fiery, and who grew almost apoplectic in his eagerness to be heard; "you remember the burglary here five years ago?"

"Yes, yes," exclaimed twenty voices.

"And the gang down here, that broke into Redgarth and the Chepstow Farm, and carried off Lord Abercromby's plate?"

"Well, well?" they eagerly demanded.

"Well, this was one of the gang!"

"He was?"

"Yes; the one that was shot in the arm. I had him under lock and key. I recognize him. There was treachery, and I was drugged, and he got off."

A titter went round the crowd at this mention of the drugging; the man's failing was a glass too much, and that had been taken advantage of to his undoing.

"Are ye sure, Davy?" asked several of the more earnest?

"Certain sure. 'Tis he."

"Down with him, then!" shouted an impetuous individual in the rear.

"Better let the baronet know," suggested another.

"No, no! Justice—let's have justice!" cried several.

"You mean murder?" demanded Jerome.

"If tar and feathers is murder, we do," cried the irate ex-serving man, putting his arms akimbo, and looking up with his red face cocked defiantly on one side.

It was too much for the Italian.

His Southern blood boiled up and blinded the reason on which he prided himself.

Acting on the heat of the moment, he clenched his fist, drew back his arm, and suddenly aimed a blow at the red nose blazing before him, which sent its aggravating little owner staggering back with a howl.

Instantly twenty fists were clenched to resent the outrage. Eyes burned, and voices loud and threatening filled the air. Opposed singly to the fons he had provoked, and who numbered about twenty or thirty, Jerome had little chance. He "set his back against a tree," like the heroes in the old ballads, when the odds

against them were too formidable, and hit out right and left.

This, however, availed little.

The chances were too desperate, and Jerome was speedily down, and would have been trampled under foot had not aid appeared in the form of a champion who came no one saw whence, but who appeared to spring up in the midst of the fray at the critical moment.

It was Oliver, the young hero of Gorewood.

With marvellous readiness and address he put himself in the place of the fallen Jerome, kept off the foot until he had regained his feet, and then, in the momentary lull occasioned by his appearance and attitude, he raised his voice in a loud, remonstrant tone.

"Are you all cowards?" he exclaimed. "Thirty to one! Is this fair fighting?"

The little man of the red face replied:

"We don't fight with vermin," he said, "we kill 'em."

"Vermin? How dare you——"

"Oh, as to that, there's more than one of 'em," said this fiery little antagonist.

"Do you mean that as a personal insult to me," said Oliver.

"You can take it as you please," sneered the other.

"I shall take it that you do, then," retorted the young man, "and I call on you to explain your words."

"Oh, with pleasure."

"And at once."

"At once? Oh, yes."

"Have done with these sneers. I take the part of a defenceless man against a crowd, and you insult me in these gross terms. Your explanation—come!"

The man hesitated a moment, then said:

"Would it be enough if I said that, to the best of my belief, you first entered this place through the turret-window up yonder?"

He pointed as he spoke to the identical window by means of which the burglary had been committed five years ago.

At his words the colour fled from the lad's cheek, and the strength seemed to forsake his arm.

"It would be a gross calumny," exclaimed Jerome.

"How do you know?" retorted the fiery little man. How, indeed?

Even Jerome was dumbfounded at the query he had provoked and could not answer.

(To be continued.)

VIVIAN TRAVERS.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

RETURNING to the other room, Lorimer inquired: "When did she get away?" "Night before last. After the robbers were here." "And where is she now?" "I don't know. Gone home, I suppose." "No, she has not. She is not there, nor has she been there. Don't you know where she is?"

"Must have gone, then, to some of her friends."

Lorimer declared that she had not done so, or she would have informed him. He was storming angrily, when the woman lifted one hand in feeble deprecation, saying:

"Don't! don't scold! I'm so ill. Won't you get me a doctor, Mr. Lorimer? I'm afraid I've got crystals in my head. I've bled awfully from these wounds, because I didn't like to have a doctor."

"Didn't like to have a doctor? Then you got your wounds in an honest way," retorted the lawyer. "I will send a doctor here to-night, giving him your version of the matter, if you'll give me some clue to Vivian's hiding-place."

The woman looked thoughtful.

During the two days of her misery that had followed the attempted burglary, she had quite decided in her own mind that Vivian must have overheard the plot, escaped, and warned Mr. Aynscourt, who was evidently lying in wait for them.

This much granted, she thought, with a groan, the maiden must have overheard her confession to Roffey that she was not her mother.

Almost wild with mental and bodily anguish, she answered:

"I—I think she is at the miser's, who lives a couple of streets from here in a very old house——"

"Why, you mean Mr. Aynscourt, the uncle of her lover?"

"Is his name Aynscourt?" gasped the ex-actress.

"Is he the uncle of her lover? Yes, she is there, I am sure of it. I didn't suspect it. Strange! strange!"

"I'll go there and inquire," said Lorimer. "I noticed that place in one of my first rides about here, and heard the story from our coachman that it belonged to Mr. Philip's uncle. But I must go."

He started towards the door, but was recalled by Mrs. Hawkers, who begged him not to forget to send her a doctor, and by Roffey, who pleaded for a glass of water.

"You've had a good beating from someone, Roffey—that is plain to be seen. But you'll get over it in a week or two. I want you to hurry and get well, for I shall have plenty of business for you."

Roffey nodded and Lorimer withdrew.

Great as was his impatience to visit the philosopher's and learn if Mrs. Hawkers's conjecture was correct, Lorimer went first in search of a physician, to whom he told the false tale given him in regard to the injuries of mother and son, promising that his fees should be liberal in case he speedily restored the two to health.

The physician, perhaps having his suspicions awakened that Lorimer himself might have inflicted the injuries of which he spoke, insisted upon the lawyer's accompanying him to the cottage, with which requisition Lorimer deemed it best to comply, anathematizing himself, however, for having gone near the man of medicine.

They proceeded together to the cottage, ascending to Mrs. Hawkers's room.

The woman lay in silence, but her son claimed the doctor's attention from the moment of his entrance, detailing volubly how he had been injured in his own house, and while defending his own property.

Deeming him the worst injured, the doctor examined his bruises, preparing a lotion for them, and finally remarking:

"You'll do, my man. You needn't be afraid of dying yet awhile. You're worth a dozen yet like your friend here," and he indicated Lorimer, who was keeping himself in the shadow. Roffey muttered his delight at this assurance, and the physician then approached the bed.

A brief examination of the injuries of the actress, and their results, brought a very grave expression to the doctor's face, and he said:

"I should have been summoned here before. How long have you been lying here neglected?"

"Two days."

"I could easily have cured you two days since," said the physician, "but now——"

"Am I going to die, doctor?" gasped the woman, feebly, endeavouring vainly to shriek; "must I die?"

The doctor answered only by silence and a look of pity.

"Must I die?" again cried the woman, her tones full of despair.

"The wounds you received were not mortal," explained the physician, "but inflammation has followed their neglect, and I do not see that you can live the week out."

A hollow groan, replete with misery, came from the woman's lips.

"Have you any friends to send for?" asked the medical man. "If so, you had better lose no time."

"I have none," was the sullen response.

"You forget your daughter," whispered Lorimer.

There was no reply.

"If I find Vivian, shall I bring her to you?" asked the lawyer.

"No. I never want to see her again. Go away."

The lawyer stepped back from the bed, and the physician said:

"I need not tell you, I hope, to make your peace with heaven, into whose presence you will soon enter. Since you have no friends," he added, "and your son is himself ill, I will send you a good Christian nurse, who will do her best to soothe and comfort you. She will be here immediately."

The lawyer and physician then withdrew together, the latter in quest of the nurse of whom he had spoken, and the former setting out for the residence of Hugh Aynscourt.

There was nothing changed from its usual appearance in the aspect of Hugh Aynscourt's dwelling, nothing to mark the metamorphosis within, as Percy Lorimer ascended the rickety steps and sounded the knocker. Not even a ray of light beamed through the close curtains, and the lawyer began to doubt that he should find Vivian there.

His knock was answered by Myrtle Osmyn, who, in a neat, plain dress, looked the very picture of a peasant, cheerful housekeeper.

"Is Miss Travers here?" asked Lorimer, with a respectful bow.

Myrtle looked puzzled. She knew the maiden only as "Miss Vivian," her stay of a few hours in the house not having made her familiar with the young girl's name and story.

"I will see," she said, concluding that Vivian was probably meant. "Who shall I say wishes to see her?"

Lorimer drew a card from his pocket, asking the housekeeper to give it into the hands of the young lady herself, if she were really there.

Miss Osmyn took the bit of pasteboard and went into the drawing-room, leaving Lorimer waiting in the hall, which though uncarpeted, was cleanly swept and dusted, and well lighted.

She had been absent but a moment when the visitor heard the sound of hurrying feet, the drawing-room door again opened, and Vivian, with a glad smile and outstretched hands, approached him, exclaiming:

"Oh, Cousin Percy, you have found me at last! We heard you had left, but I was intending to write you a note this very evening."

Lorimer held her hands in a firm, close clasp, appearing to be overcome by emotion at sight of her.

"Oh, Vivian!" he exclaimed, with affected tremulousness, "what have I not suffered since your mysterious disappearance! I have been frantic! Where have you been?"

"I will explain all to you soon, Cousin Percy. But tell me first about papa and mamma—and Philip. I am very anxious about them all. What did they think of my absence?"

"What could they think? We knew it could not be voluntary. They wondered greatly that you should have discovered that you were only their child by adoption, or that you should have yielded such ready credence to the words of a stranger."

"You did not tell them, then, of the conversation we overheard?"

"No, I could not."

"And where are they now?"

"Still seeking for you. From the telegrams I have received from them, I fear they will not return under a month."

"A month! Oh, Percy! You must telegraph to them this very evening that I am found and safe, will you not?"

Lorimer assented, though such an act was the farthest from his intentions.

The escape of the maiden to the protection of friends had been a great blow to him, as he had intended making a favourable impression upon her mind by his devotedness to her cause and his intended rescue of her at an opportune moment.

Instead of apprising her friends of her safety, he intended to entrap her into a renewed captivity, unless she met his addresses favourably. How this captivity should be accomplished, and who should be her jailer, in case of Mrs. Hawkers's death, he had not decided, but his chief dependence was upon Oliver Roffey, who, he felt sure, would not fail him, so long as he held out a promise of a handsome reward for his services.

None of these thoughts could have been detected in his glad expressions and looks of feigned joy at her safety.

"I am staying here with Mr. Aynscourt, Philip's uncle," said Vivian, breaking the brief silence, and withdrawing her hands from his clasp. "Come in and see him."

She conducted him into the cheerful drawing-room, where the philosopher was seated at one corner of the hearth, his feet upon a cushion, a late review in his hands, and his dog beside him.

At Lorimer's entrance he arose, acknowledged the introduction by a bow, and then regarded the visitor with a keen scrutiny that seemed to read his very soul.

And then, as if quite forgetful of his presence, he resumed his seat and occupation, without a word.

"You seem very comfortably situated here, Cousin Vivian," remarked the visitor, seating himself upon a sofa near the door and drawing the maiden beside him. "I had no idea, judging from the exterior and the hall, that there could be such a handsome room within."

"It is pleasant," returned Vivian, with a keen appreciation of the change she had wrought.

"But how came you here? Why did you not return home immediately after leaving your relatives?"

In reply Vivian informed him of the plot she had overheard for robbing the philosopher's dwelling, her escape, her coming to warn Mr. Aynscourt, and her reasons for remaining with him until the return of her parents.

"Ah, I see where Mrs. Hawkers and Roffey got wounded!" mused Lorimer.

"Then you have seen them?"

"Yes, I tracked them to a cottage near here, and found them both ill. Mrs. Hawkers told me she thought you were here, although she gave no reasons for her belief, and I came here in search of you."

"Am I safe here, then? They will not molest me?"

"Never again—while I live!" was the rejoinder.

"Oh, Vivian, do you not know that I would spill my last drop of blood in your defence?"

The maiden not replying, Lorimer asked :

" Tell me, Cousin Vivian, how came you to warn Mr. Aynscourt against your relatives ? Bad as they are, they have still a claim upon you."

" None whatever, Percy. She is not my mother, and he is not my brother."

" Not your relatives ! " cried Lorimer. " I suspected it. How did you find it out ? "

Vivian informed him.

Excusing the mother and son for having exchanged their confidence in the room adjoining their prisoner's, the lawyer inquired, with anxiety :

" Did you learn who your parents were, Cousin Vivian ? "

" My mother was a poor seamstress—a young widow, with but one child—myself. She died soon after giving me away."

A strange smile wreathed Lorimer's lips—a smile of incredulity; but Vivian did not observe it.

" So Mrs. Hawkers had formed a design of uniting you to her son ? " he said, compressing his lips. " She was endeavouring to play a nice game. She might have succeeded in it had it not been for her too great anxiety to get rich."

" She alluded several times to a sum of ten thousand pounds in connection with me, which she expected to receive, if I should not be forced into a marriage with Olcher. I wonder what she meant ? "

" I can't imagine. Perhaps she intended exacting that amount from Mr. Travers as a ransom for you."

" Is she dangerously ill, Cousin Percy ? "

" I believe so. I went for a doctor for her, and he said she had neglected her wounds too long. If she should die it would be in consequence of the neglect, not because the wounds were in themselves dangerous."

" Thank heaven ! " murmured Vivian, with a sigh of relief. " I did but my duty in warning uncle of their designs, but I cannot bear to think that I have been instrumental in their death."

" You did right, dear Vivian, as you always do. What would I not give if that tender heart which so pities the sufferings of others would but pity me ! " exclaimed Lorimer, in a tone that reached her ears alone. " I have gone without food and drink since you disappeared, searching for you day and night, and oppressed with anguish at our—at my—irreparable loss. Oh, Vivian ! can you not reconsider your refusal of me ? May I not hope ? "

" No, Cousin Percy," replied the young girl, gently and sorrowfully. " You know that I am promised to Philip."

" But he does not—cannot love you as I do. He would soon transfer his love to another—"

" You do not know him as I do ! " and Vivian's eyes were luminous in her great faith in her lover. " Philip is the truest, the noblest, the best—but pardon me, Percy, I do not mean to wound you. I will be your friend, your sister, but I cannot be your wife."

Lorimer bit his lips with chagrin, and his face expressed the bitter disappointment he felt at her response.

" I cannot bear this refusal—I cannot ! " he exclaimed.

Vivian answered only by a tear, but he saw that she would not relent, and he began to canvass in his mind various projects by which to subdue her will to his.

A silence fell between them, during which the thoughts of both were busy.

The philosopher, sitting in his arm-chair, and apparently busy with his review, had, although unable to hear their words, formed a pretty shrewd conjecture as to the subject and tenor of their conversation, the countenances of both Vivian and her cousin having been closely studied by him.

As they became silent, he looked out from under his brows at the well-lighted, glowing room, the blazing fire, his contented dog upon the rug, and lastly at the trim figure and attractive face of Myrtle Osmyn, as she bent over her work.

His glances lingered long upon her, as if she were a pleasing object. He marked the glossiness of her dark hair, smoothly brushed behind her ears and coiled into a graceful knot behind, and noticed the absence of even a ribbon or a flower about her head. He observed that she wore no ornaments, that her plain gray dress was the same she had worn when he saw her first, and that her only token of mourning was a knot of narrow black ribbons fastening her small white linen collar.

He noticed how deftly she sewed—how much at home she seemed in her corner of the fire-place, and that Sir William gave her now and then a friendly look, showing that he did not consider her an intruder.

Comparing the lovely, sunshiny Vivian to a humming-bird, he likened the staid Myrtle to a brown wren, and wondered if the elder woman would not make him a good, true wife, and the younger be to him a loving and beloved daughter.

Why should he not marry ? he thought. Older men than he had taken upon themselves marriage vows, and why should not he look forward, as well as they, to a pleasant and happy old age ? He felt sure that he could brighten the life of this patient woman, even if she did not regard him with the ardent affection a wife ought to feel, and which he was quite certain he could give her. He thought it would be pleasant to belong to a quiet, well-ordered household, of which she should be the mistress, and mentally made a picture in which he and she were the prominent figures.

It had been but a very few hours since Miss Osmyn's appearance at the philosopher's dwelling, as has been said, but she had slid immediately into her position as housekeeper, asking no questions, but setting to work as if she felt at home and desired to make everybody happy around her. Her scanty luggage had been stowed in a closet adjoining Vivian's room, and a lounge near Vivian's bed had been given to her as her own couch, the maiden promising her the whole room within a week.

She had, as soon as settled, made the back room the field of extensive operations, sweeping, cleaning, and dusting.

The supper, which had been bountiful in every respect, had been cooked by her, instead of being purchased at the restaurant; and she had relieved Sir William of the marketing, going out before dusk and returning with a very large basket filled with parcels of provisions, at sight of which the philosopher was aghast. He wisely kept silence, however, listening to her as she detailed the contents of each parcel and put them away in a cupboard, and wondering if she indulged in the hallucination that all that rice, sugar, tea, coffee, butter, &c., &c., would ever be eaten by him or his canine friend.

After supper, Vivian had taken an opportunity to inform him that she liked Myrtle extremely well, and the young girl's opinion had great weight with him.

Anybody that Vivian liked, he argued, must be good.

He could see for himself that she was a lady. Her repose of manner, her well-bred air, her uprightness of carriage, were not characteristics of the vulgar and ignorant, any more than were her correctness of speech and occasional sage remarks.

Thinking all these things, he sank into a reverie, from which he was aroused by Lorimer's voice, the lawyer declaring that he must go, as he wished to telegraph to the senator immediately.

" You will come to see me in the morning, Cousin Percy ? " asked the young girl.

" Yes, and tell you if I have received a reply from your parents."

Making his adieux, Lorimer took his departure, escorted to the door by Vivian, who gave him her hand timidly at parting.

He pressed it, and went away, a host of savage emotions tearing at his heart.

" I will have her ! " he muttered, fiercely, as he strode down the street. " It will be easy to ensue her again, and Roffey shall be her jailer. He shall take her some distance. Her person and the fortune she will have shall not escape me. Roffey is not too ill to arouse himself to the work before us. I will see him the first thing in the morning."

Excited and troubled, yet by no means despairing of ultimate success, Lorimer summoned a cab and drove home.

Dennis admitted him on his arrival, and exclaimed :

" There's a letter for you, Mr. Lorimer. I haven't opened it. Oh, if they have only found Miss Vivian ! "

Lorimer took the telegram, going into the drawing-room, whither the eager and trembling servant followed him.

It was from Mr. Travers, and stated that they had discovered that the two women whom they had been following were not those of whom they were in search, and that they were already on their return home, where they might be expected the next evening.

Dennis retreated to the hall, sobbing bitterly, on learning that Vivian was not yet found, and Lorimer muttered :

" Only to-night and to-morrow to operate in ! Vivian must have disappeared again before their return. I must see Roffey to-night—within the hour. There's not a second to lose ! "

He crumpled the message in his hand, striding across the floor, his features expressing his alarm at the speedy return.

" I could choke Mrs. Hawkers for her attempt at robbing old Aynscourt ! " he said. " What business had she to do anything that would interfere with my plans ? So she is not Vivian's mother ? I thought as much. I'll go and see Roffey, and at the same time verify my suspicions in regard to Vivian's birth."

He quitted the house abruptly, and, taking a cab, hastened back to see Roffey.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

WHEN Lorimer re-entered Mrs. Hawkers's chamber he was startled at the change that had taken place in its occupants since his recent visit.

The ex-actress had been undressed, for the first time since receiving her wounds, and now lay in bed, her face as white as the pillow against which it rested. Her son sat beside the couch, holding her hand, quite forgetful of himself in his alarm for her. The nurse, a quiet-looking personage, was bathing the sick woman's head, at the same time addressing her words of advice in low and soothing tones.

At sight of Lorimer, Mrs. Hawkers made a gesture of loathing, saying, feebly :

" I was good enough till he tempted me with his money. Whatever wrong I had ever done I had nearly repaired, when he bribed me—"

She paused, and the lawyer asked :

" Is she worse ? "

" Yes," answered the nurse, quietly. " She is quite past recovery."

The sick woman moaned faintly, then whispered to her attendant :

" I will do as you have advised me. Except one—two things, I never did anyone a wrong. One was this last thing when I got hurt. The other I will repair. Send for her—the young girl I spoke of."

The nurse bowed and withdrew, and Lorimer heard her in the hall in conversation with a boy he remembered to have seen upon the stairs.

Approaching the bed, he said :

" Mrs. Hawkers, Vivian tells me that she overheard you say that she is not your child. I suspected as much before. You do not deny it ? "

The woman looked surprised, although she was too weak to experience any strong emotion, and then replied that Vivian had heard truly.

" She heard you tell Roffey that she was the child of a poor widow, who gave her to you. This was a false assertion on your part, was it not ? "

The ex-actress nodded assent.

" I thought so," and there was a spice of triumph in the lawyer's tones. " I think I can tell you who she is. Her resemblance to my cousin's wife is more than accidental. In plain words, Mrs. Hawkers, Vivian is the child of the immaculate Mrs. Travers, who placed her in your charge, hiring you to take care of her while she was a mere infant. At a suitable time, when the child had become very engaging, you took her to the Travers's, Mrs. Travers proposing to adopt her as the lawful heiress of herself and husband. There is the whole story as well as you could have told it; but I discovered it by reasoning, with only a few facts to guide me. Tell me—is it not true ? "

" Not quite," said Mrs. Hawkers. " I have sent for Vivian, who will soon be here. You shall then know the truth."

Lorimer began a vigorous protestation against any communication to Vivian on the subject, but, the nurse entering, he was obliged to cease his remarks.

Undecided whether or not to be present at the promised confession, he finally retreated to a gloomy corner, determined that if Vivian came alone she should depart only in his company. He would even let the mask fall, and stand forth in her sight the villain he was, rather than that she should escape his toils altogether.

All the evil in his nature grew into hideous luxuriance during those moments of anxious waiting.

" I will do it—I will do it ! " the ex-actress kept continually muttering. " I will repair the only wrong I ever did. Why don't she hurry ? "

" What wrong, mother ? " asked Roffey, once or twice.

" They can't harm you, Olcher, for what your mother did ! " was the irrelevant reply. " Oh ! why don't she come ? "

At length there was a slight stir in the hall, the door opened, and Vivian entered.

Behind her, to Lorimer's amazement and confusion, came Hugh Aynscourt, Miss Osmyn, and a gentleman who appeared to be a notary.

The last-named individual carried writing-materials in his hands. He placed them upon a table indicated by the nurse, who betrayed no surprise at his presence, and took a seat beside them.

Vivian advanced directly to the bedside, the philosopher following her as a guard, yet keeping himself out of the range of the woman's vision.

" You are very ill, Mrs. Hawkers," said the young girl, gently and pityingly.

The woman answered, faintly :

" Yes, I am going to die. You are very good to come and see me. I have a confession to make."

The notary drew his table a little nearer, and dipped his pen in the ink.

" Does the confession refer to me, Mrs. Hawkers ? " asked Vivian. " You need not tell about my being brought here. My simple word will suffice."

" It is not that. It is about your birth—who you

are. You were not the daughter of a poor widow, as I told Olcher. Listen, I have a strange story to tell you. I was an actress, and married for my second husband Lesley Hawkers, the son of a rich and proud family. He died, leaving me with a baby girl, his child and mine, to support. Thinking the old folks would do something handsome for their grandchild, I started to visit them, although they had never acknowledged or even noticed me. But I had great hopes on little Lyddy's account."

She paused, asked for water, which was given her, and Roffey remarked that that part of the story was well known to him.

"But not to the rest," said his mother, glancing restlessly around her. "I was walking part of the distance to save money; little Lyddy took sick and died. She had a fit, I think. I grieved more at her death because now I could not expect to get anything from Lesley's folks. I was going towards the town when I came to a handsome country-seat, with trees and arbours, and a pond. It belonged, as I afterwards discovered, to Drayton Travers."

Stepping for another drink of water and to rest a moment, the ex-actress soon resumed :

"Miserable and poor, I entered the grounds, thinking I'd tell my story to the lady of the house and ask her assistance. I went along one of the winding walks, with my little dead Lyddy in my arms, and soon came to a point where the walk touched the edge of the pond. There, under the trees, all alone, toddling about—for it wasn't a year old—was the prettiest little creature I had ever seen, dressed like a little fairy. Looking at it, and at my dead child, the evil one entered my heart."

Every word of this confession had been followed by the busy strokes of the notary's pen, and listened to with breathless attention by the remaining auditors.

"The little rich child was a girl, about the same age as my Lyddy, and with features not unlike hers. The hair was almost exactly the same. I won't tell you how long I hesitated, or how I argued, for I wasn't all bad, though it seems so; but at last I took up the little thing, took off its rich clothes and jewellery, and changed them for Lyddy's. I kept it still, though it was hard work, and it didn't take me long to fit Lyddy out in the rich child's things. Then I put the dead baby into the pond, took up the living one, hiding it under my shawl, and hurried away as fast as I could. Nobody had seen me, and I felt safe. As I passed out of the gate, creeping in the shadow of the fence, I saw the careless nurse-maid flirting with the gardener at quite a little distance, and by the way she laughed I knew she didn't suspect any harm could come to her little charge. Is that all down?"

The notary answered in the affirmative.

"I travelled on to Colonel Hawkers's, got an audience from him on account of the child, and, well contented, I went back, where I took rooms and went to keeping house, with my son Olcher here and the stolen baby. One day I happened to come across an old paper, and read in it an account of the death of the only child of Mr. Travers, who had got drowned while playing, its careless nurse having neglected it. Well, I went to Mrs. Travers and told her I'd heard of her loss the previous year, that I was a poor widow, and offered to let her have my child. She and Mr. Travers accepted my offer, paid me a thousand pounds, and took the child. I went back well satisfied that I had done right. I've always been easy about the matter since, because then that had the natural right to her had her in their possession."

The woman was now completely exhausted, although throughout the narration she had frequently paused to rest and collect her thoughts.

She lay with her eyes shut, breathing heavily, until the notary came to her requesting her to sign the confession, which he read over to her.

She signed it without hesitation in a handwriting that evidenced her weakness.

"Only one thing more," she said. "Forgive me!"

Her pleading look was not ignored by Vivian, who took her hand kindly, and said, with joyful tears :

"I forgive you, Mrs. Hawkers, for myself, and in the name of my dear, dear parents! May heaven forgive you as freely!"

"There's something more that I forgot," faltered the ex-actress.

She proceeded to narrate how and why she had recently abducted Vivian, showing Lorimer in his true colours; nor did she stop until the young girl was in possession of the whole story.

"And now you must all go!" said the nurse, decidedly. "She must sleep!"

No one wished to linger.

The notary and Miss Osmyn went out first, and the philosopher then conducted Travers towards the door.

Just as they reached it she paused, her gaze resting upon Percy Lorimer, who, consuming with rage, glowered at her from the corner in which he had secreted himself.

She looked at him a full moment—not revengefully, not triumphantly, but with a deep sadness upon her gloriously beautiful face. But as she marked his sullen, evil expression, her look changed to one of intense pity and forgiveness that haunted him ever after.

And then, her hand on Mr. AynsCourt's arm, she quitted the room.

She never beheld Lorimer again.

The next morning, with Mr. AynsCourt, she went home, Dennis almost fainting with joy at beholding her.

He told her of the telegram Lorimer had received, and Vivian wept with joy at the prospect of her parents' early return.

They arrived in the evening, weary, worn, and dispirited, with the equally depressed Philip, and Dennis, quivering with delight, ushered them into Mrs. Travers's boudoir, where Vivian awaited them.

There was a joyful meeting, which we shrink from endeavouring to portray, lest we fail to do justice to it.

To the parents were given her first embrace, then she wept upon her lover's breast, his tears flowing with hers, and then, as Mrs. Travers sank into her chair, Vivian sprang again into her arms, sobbing:

"Oh, mamma! so much has happened since you went away. Mrs. Hawkers is dying, and has declared that I am your own child!"

"So you are, darling!" replied Mrs. Travers, tenderly, not comprehending the full import of her daughter's words.

Vivian could not explain it, but she was spared the trouble by the opportune entrance of Mr. AynsCourt and the notary.

At sight of his uncle in gentlemanly attire, and without Sir William, Philip was justly astonished.

After greeting his nephew and Vivian's parents, the philosopher introduced the notary, who, after a few prefatory remarks, read the full confession of Mrs. Hawkers.

Philip, his uncle, and the notary then stole from the room, leaving the parents with their child.

What a scene followed!

Mrs. Hawkers lingered long enough in the shadow of death to repeat her confession to Mr. and Mrs. Travers, who accorded her their full forgiveness, and then she passed away.

After her funeral, Olcher Roffey sold off her effects, found what money she had secreted, re-let the house, and disappeared.

During the remainder of the gay season Vivian was more than ever the bello. Idolized by her parents and lover, she was courted by society, flattered by old and young, made a reigning queen, but remained unspoiled through all her prosperity and good fortune.

During the same period she was the sunshine of the philosopher's home, and watched with pleasure the growing interest of "Uncle Hugh" in his staid and quiet housekeeper. It was she who convinced the old man that he was not too old to marry, and that Myrtle would, and could, and did love him for himself alone.

In June the Travers's, Philip AynsCourt, his uncle, and Miss Osmyn went to the splendid country estate of the Travers's.

In the same month, one beautiful morning, when the air was laden with the perfume of roses, Vivian Travers and Philip AynsCourt were married. As they stepped away from the altar the old philosopher handed his nephew a package of papers tied with red tape, and then led Miss Osmyn before the minister, who speedily made them one in law, Sir William barking his approval at the conclusion of the ceremony.

On looking over his bridal gift from his uncle, Philip discovered that it represented the sum of one hundred and twenty thousand pounds—half of his uncle's fortune—variously invested in stocks, real estate, and bank accounts.

The old philosopher purchased a small estate adjoining the Travers's, built a cozy bird's-nest of a villa, naming the place "The Myrtles," purchased an immense quantity of myrtle vines with which to overrun his estate, banished his once favourite philosopher to the attic, and prepared to enjoy life with his wife. But he never can be persuaded that Sir William Hamilton's soul is not imprisoned in the body of his canine friend, and his good wife never attempts to argue the point with him.

He cherishes the doctrines of Pythagoras, frequently quotes Diogenes, Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, and the rest, but he is now engaged in studying under a very despotic teacher, a juvenile Hugh, a sturdy young gentleman of four years, who was presented to him by Myrtle a year or so after their marriage.

It is a matter of great pleasure to the philosopher

that Sir William is strongly attached to Master Hugh not disdaining to share his gambols, or serve as a horse or any other required capacity, to the chubby heir of The Myrtles.

There are two mistresses at the stately mansion—the lovely Vivian and her queenly mother. There are also two masters.

But there is no clashing; all is harmony and peace in that pleasant home, where every day, whatever the outward weather, seems as though it might have strayed from paradise.

There were two little ones to shout with delight at his coming—an Everard and a Madelon—who are the idols of their grandparents, and with these little children, Mr. and Mrs. Travers, and his sunny-tempered Vivian, Philip feels that home is the dearest spot on earth, and that no laurel wreaths or civic honours shall ever draw him from it.

THE END.

ZEHRA.

CHAPTER I.

CHRISTIANS had by degrees gained possession of all the Spanish Peninsula save Granada; but Granada still gave a home and a kingdom to the Moor, and here the Moslem held his sceptre against the mighty powers that were growing in the North. There were scenes of festivity in Granada, and magnificent tournaments, too, were held there; nor was the participation in these confined to the Moors, for Christian knights, from Spain, and France, and Germany, frequently came and joined in the lists. The Moor was wary, however, and his darkly flashing eye slept not upon his Christian visitors.

It was a bright morning in early summer. The gardens, the fields, and the forests, were clothed in their gayest vestments, and the birds sent aloft the notes of their thanksgiving in sweetly sounding, musical psalms. Near the river Guadix, and upon its northern bank, appeared two horsemen; their beasts were standing still, and the riders were gazing upon a stream that flowed before them. Back of them, towards the north, was a deep forest, from which they had just emerged, while ahead, to the southward, some twelve miles distant, a few glittering spires could be seen, and near these loomed up the bright towers of the Alhambra. Farther on, the eye rested upon the snow-clad summits of the heaven-reaching Alpujarras, with the Sierra Nevada, towering aloft with its crown of regal white, the monarch of mountain Spain.

The first of the horsemen was a young man attired in a gorgeous suit of mail. The subtle links were of the brightest steel, and they were wrought with the most exquisite skill and workmanship. Over this suit of full mail the man wore a frock of crimson silk, upon the breast of which was wrought in golden threads the cross of Leon. Upon his head he wore a steel cap, formed of nicely adjusted plates, slightly conical in its form, and from the top of which waved a triple plume of white ostrich feathers. If the cross upon the knight's breast did not at once betray the kingdom whence he came, the rich dress of the black steed that bore him would have cleared the matter at once. Over the plates of steel that the horse wore upon his breast, and covering the back and sides of the animal, was a drapery of crimson silk, upon which was wrought in various colours of silver and gold the cross and the lion—the insignia of Christian Leon.

The knight was not over six-and-twenty years of age, being tall and well formed, with a fulness of limb and muscle that spoke of much strength and manly exercise. His hair was worn in the usual manner of the times, long and flowing, the curls of which escaped freely from beneath the steel cap. His features were noble in their moulding, and possessed a degree of beauty that can be made up only from the promptings of a generous soul, and a noble and brave heart.

The knight's companion was an odd-looking being, dressed in the common garb of an humble esquire, with leggins of half-armour, and wearing a stout breast-plate. He wore upon his head a steel skull-cap, and the fact that looked out from beneath the small visor was beaming with good-nature and shrewd cunning. He was some years older than his master, and though not so tall by several inches, he yet possessed a quantity of muscle that showed itself in big masses about his breast and limbs, and those who had come once within his clutches never afterwards doubted that Pedro Bambino's muscle was as good in quality as in quantity. The horse he rode was of an iron-gray colour, and full as stout as his master's.

"Pedro," said the knight, as he reined his horse farther back from the edge of the river, "there must be a bridge somewhere about here."

"In truth there is," returned the esquire, "or at least there used to be one, for I crossed it myself not

a dozen years ago; but I think it is farther up the stream."

"Then up the stream we'll go," said the knight, as he turned his horse's head in that direction.

Accordingly, both riders started off, and at the end of half an hour they came to the place where a bridge was thrown across the river. They passed over to the other side, and there they found themselves in a broad road that led to the city of Granada.

"We are in the right way now," said Pedro Bambino.

"Yes," returned the knight.

"But what would all this gain us if they wouldn't let us into the city?" suggested the esquire.

"There'll be no trouble about that, Pedro. A peaceable Christian knight will not be refused admittance into the city."

"Nor a peaceable Christian esquire," added Pedro.

"No," said the knight, with a smile.

"Then there can't be much danger," continued Pedro, as he spurred up his horse.

For some time the two rode on in silence. Even the mind of the esquire seemed deeply interested in the gorgeous scenery that opened upon the view, and more than once he allowed his horse to stop, as he became lost in a sort of rapt wonder at the scenes that lay ahead. The snow-capped Alpujarras riveted most of his attention, and it was not until the taller forest trees began to gather over his head and shut out the mountains, that he gave any due attention to his beast.

"What does that mean?" uttered Pedro, as they entered a ravine of palms and gall-nuts.

"What?" returned the knight, casting an inquisitive glance at his companion.

"My horse smells something. See him toss that dainty head and open those nostrils. There—hear that snort."

Both men cast their eyes about them, and it was not long before the object that had awakened the instinct of the brute was discovered. Upon the side of the road, and at the foot of a huge rock, sat a man who seemed by his countenance to be in considerable pain. He seemed an old man, for his hair and beard were gray, and he was dressed in the garb of a man in the lower ranks of life. The Christians pulled in their steeds as they came abreast of where the man sat, and the knight bent over to get a fair view of him.

"Sir Knight," said the man, half-raising himself to his feet, "do you go to the city?"

"Yes."

"Then, in the name of the God you worship, I ask you to carry me."

"San Jago, good man," quickly responded Pedro—for he knew that if the man were carried, his horse would have to bear the burden—"our horses are way-worn now. We've ridden half the night, and 'twould be—"

"Stop, Pedro," interrupted the knight, and then turning towards the Moor, he continued, "Are you unable to walk?"

"I am, most truly, Sir Knight. I had climbed upon the top of this rock, and fell. My right ankle is badly sprained, and I fear I am otherwise injured."

"What could you want up there?" asked Pedro, casting his eyes up to where the rock towered above his head.

"I wanted to see the rising sun," returned the Moor.

"You'd better have been in your bed than running after the sun, I should say."

There was a spark of indignation flashing in the dark eye of the Moor, but it quickly changed to a cast of melancholy thought, and looking sharply into Pedro's face, he said:

"My God made the sun the most glorious of all His creations, and I love to look upon it. But my likes shall not sit heavily on you. Go your way; and I will crawl to the city as best I can."

"Hold—not quite so fast," said the knight. "My good esquire has a way peculiarly his own; but, as good Christians, we'll not leave you here to suffer. Pedro, help the man to mount behind you. I know you wouldn't feel easy to leave him here."

With more alacrity than might have been expected, Pedro leaped from his horse, and assisted the Moor to his feet. It was with much difficulty that the poor fellow moved along with Pedro's aid, and not until the knight himself alighted and gave his assistance, could the Moor be lifted to the horse's back.

"Sir Knight," said the lame man, as the trio were mounted, "I do not wish to ask of you too much, but if you would hasten on to the city as fast as possible we would do me a favour for which I will be grateful."

The knight bade Pedro put spurs to his horse, and for some distance they galloped on at a good speed. At length they came to an abrupt hill, and the beasts were allowed to walk up.

"You have come to join in the tournament to-morrow, I suppose," said the Moor, as he ran his eyes over the knight's fine figure.

"Now not there was one," returned the Christian,

with a kindling eye. "But 't faith, I shall be there if there is."

"There will be a grand display of prowess, and many a bright eye to bear it witness," said the Moor.

"By San Dominic, then I shall bear it witness too," cried Pedro, with a joyful look. "I'll bear my master's shield against the list. Ha! Pedro, we'll see."

As the esquire said this he patted his horse emphatically upon the neck and looked proudly upon his master. The Moor, too, gazed upon the knight.

"You are from Leon," he said.

"Yes," returned the knight.

"And a count, too," returned the Moor.

"Yes."

"Count of Valladolid, too," answered the Moor.

"Your eyes are sharp," said the knight, with a smile.

"Sharp enough to know the meaning of your triple plume," said the Moor.

"So, so. Well, I am Charles, Count of Valladolid and Knight-royal of Leon."

"And what is Count Charles of Valladolid doing so far south?"

"Seeing the country," returned the knight. And then, with a sharp look into the face of the Moor, he continued:

"As you are the first acquaintance I have made, whom might I call you?"

"To tell the truth, good count," answered the Moslem, while a peculiar look overspread his features, "it makes little difference what you call me. In all probability, you will never see me again, and I don't believe I shall ever reward you for the kindness you are at present doing me. However, I am sometimes called Abdalla, and if that name suit you, so you may call me."

The knight gazed curiously upon the Moor, for the swarthy features were not only regular and well formed, but they possessed a degree of intelligence that was not to be overlooked. There was something in his manner, too, that was puzzling, to say the least.

"Do you belong to the city of Granada?" asked Sir Charles.

"As much there as anywhere."

"But to judge from your haste you have urgent business there now?"

"Yes."

That monosyllable was pronounced in a tone so peculiar that even Pedro turned half about in his saddle and gazed into the face of the Moor.

"By San Dominic, but you are a curious man, all ways," said the esquire.

"And this is a very curious world. Have you not discovered that yet?"

"I faith, you speak the truth now," uttered Pedro, and as he spoke he turned once more to his horse's head.

They had topped the hill, and the city was open to view. The horses were put to a brisk trot, and nothing more was said until the gate was reached. The party were admitted without much questioning, and as they entered the city the people were busy at their daily callings.

"Here," said the Moor, as they reached a narrow street that turned off towards the eastern part of the city, "let me down here."

"I will see you to your destination," said the knight.

"This is near enough, sir. If you will accept my thanks for your kindness thus far, I will trouble you no farther."

Pedro helped the Moor to the pavement. The poor man stood with difficulty, and the count could not fail to see that his attempts to walk were attended with the most exquisite pain; yet he assured the knight that he could make his way alone, and that he should prefer to do so.

"Charles of Valladolid," said the Moor, as he turned towards the knight, "you say that you have come here to see the country, but if you have business, be wary in performing it."

The knight looked wonderingly upon the Moslem; but Abdalla waited for no answer. He turned and moved slowly, painfully away.

"By San Jago, Sir Charles, what do you make of that?" uttered Pedro.

"I can make nothing of it," returned the knight, in a pensive, thoughtful mood, and without further remark he started on.

Without difficulty the count found an inn that suited him, and having seen that his horse would be well provided for, he entered the building and ordered breakfast for himself and esquire.

CHAPTER II.

DURING the day the Knight of Leon did little else than look about the city in company with his honest esquire. It was no unusual thing for Christians to be seen in the city, and the count and his companions attracted

only passing notice from the Moors. Great preparations were going on for the tournament that was to come off the next day. It was to be held in a large square beyond the hill upon which stood the Alhambra, and thither the knight bent his steps towards the close of the day. The Granadian king, Mohammed VI., gave but little attention to the manly sports that so well suited the tastes of his subjects, and, in fact, he gave but little attention to anything save his own pleasure and personal comfort, with just enough of mental and physical activity to keep his throne from falling beneath him.

The present anticipated tournament had been agreed to by the king, at the urgent solicitation of many of his best knights, and he had agreed not only to be present at its passage, but he was to superintend it.

When Charles of Leon returned to his inn in the evening, he had resolved to attend the tournament on the following day.

"But will it be well?" queried Pedro.

"And how can it be evil?" asked the count. "I'll tell you. You know you are counted the best lances in Leon. Now, if you enter the lists to-morrow, you may come off the victor, and, by San Dominic, that wouldn't suit these hot-blooded Moors."

"You take it wrongly, Pedro. There are good knights in Granada, and they will not prove themselves so mean as to turn enemies against one who proved their better in the use of arms. No, no, good Pedro, don't fear on that account, for I assure you all will be well."

"Well, just as you please," returned Pedro; and he spoke in a dubious manner, and shortly afterwards he set about preparing his master's armour.

The next morning was fair and bright. At an early hour the people began to flock to the spot where the tournament was to take place, and at ten o'clock the king entered the enclosure and took his seat. The trumpets sounded a furious blast, and the jousting began. For two hours the sport continued, and Ben Hamed, the Alcalde of Granada, stood the victor. He was a powerful, subtle knight, and he swung his spear aloft, and vauntingly challenged all opponents. Two more Moorish knights appeared against him; but one after the other they were vanquished, and then more proudly than ever did Ben Hamed swing his spear aloft.

Charles of Leon pushed his horse through the crowd that was collected outside of the paling, but ere he reached it he caught the sound of his own name pronounced near to his side.

"Beware! Make not an enemy of the Alcalde!"

The knight turned his head, and he saw Abdalla limping away through the crowd. He knew it was the same Abdalla that he had picked up by the roadside, though he looked somewhat different. His hair and beard were jet black, and he looked many years younger. The voice, however, the count knew, and he knew the countenance, too. The strange Moor was soon out of sight, and the count again pushed towards the paling. His soul was set upon a joust against him; but one after the other they were vanquished, and then more proudly than ever did Ben Hamed swing his spear.

"What ho, there! Here comes a Christian knight to give thee battle, Ben Hamed," exclaimed the king, as Charles of Leon entered the lists.

The Alcalde turned his flashing eyes upon the new comer, and proudly drawing back, he awaited the Christian's approach.

"What seek ye here?" cried Ben Hamed.

"To give thee a friendly joust," returned Charles; "that is, if the lists be open to me."

"Of course they are open, if you be a true knight," said the king.

"I am a true knight of Leon, and this day shall prove it, though I may go down before the lance of the Alcalde; yet if I bear me at all before one whose prowess has been so well proved, you will know me for a knight."

At the first part of his speech Ben Hamed frowned, but at its close he looked upon the Christian with a half-scowl expression, as he jauntily balanced his lance in his hand.

"Go, take your ground," he said.

"Shall it be with lance and shield?" asked Charles.

"Yes."

The count rode back to the paling where Pedro was stationed, and took his shield. From one of the marshals he received a round-headed spear, and then the trumpet sounded.

Charles of Leon was habited the same as we saw him upon the road, and his appearance attracted the attention of all. His horse seemed eager for the onset, and he pranced in his instinctive pride.

Again the herald sounded the trumpet, and Charles gave his steed the rein. The Moor and the Christian met. Ben Hamed sat like a rock in his saddle, while the count was jostled, but he lost not of his balance. That instant Charles saw and understood the Alcalde's subtle play. With a movement so quick that it was



[THE KNIGHT OF LEON AND HIS ESQUIRE.]

almost imperceptible, and one that must have required long practice for its perfection, the Moor had swung his spear across the eyes of his adversary's horse with a circular sweep before he brought it to its final poise; but the Christian determined that it should not be done again.

It was with a confident air that Ben Hamed turned his horse for the second joust, and when the trumpet sounded, he set boldly forward.

Again the riders met, but Ben Hamed passed not, for the Knight of Leon's lance-head struck him full in the throat and hurled him to the ground.

There was a low murmur ran around among the spectators, and a careful observer would have seen that there was much satisfaction felt at the result of the last joust; but the people dared not give boisterous speech to their feelings, for the Alcalde was feared.

As Ben Hamed sprang to his feet, there was fierce passion in his features, and for a moment he was speechless. But soon he found his tongue, and seizing his horse's rein, he turned to Charles of Leon, and throwing his shield upon the ground, he shouted:

"Down with your lance and shield! I'll have at thee now with the cimeter. You shall show your prowess to better advantage ere I have done with thee."

"The sword is not a weapon for a joust," returned Charles. "It is too dangerous for sport."

"Ha, ha! and is the Christian dog in fear?"

This was spoken by the exasperated Moor in a loud, defiant, bitter tone, and sent the rich blood coursing quickly through the Christian's veins.

"The Christian does not fear!" he returned, in a proud tone.

"Then draw your sword and throw away all else," exclaimed the Alcalde, as he mounted his horse and drew his bright cimeter.

"If the king will hold me clear of the consequences, I will meet you."

"Ben Hamed, you had better give over the trial, and go back to the lance," said the monarch.

"No, no—the sword it shall be!" cried the Alcalde.

"Then the Christian knight shall be free from all harm, save such as he meets at the hands of his antagonist. Let the signal be given."

The trumpet sounded, and Charles of Leon drew his sword: it was a keen weapon; straight and double-edged, with the usual cross hilt.

The Moor met him, and some dozen blows were exchanged without effect; but at length Charles wounded his antagonist on the shoulder. Ben Hamed

saw that he had a superior to deal with, and he determined to ride him down.

To this end he drew in his reins and at a word his horse reared, and would have struck his fore feet directly upon the Christian's body; but Charles saw the movement, and he not only avoided it, but he took advantage of it.

His own horse was well trained, and he made the noble animal perform a leap that set the Moor at fault.

As Ben Hamed's horse was reared proudly upon his hind legs, the horse of the Christian sprang quickly against his haunch, and both Moor and beast went tumbling on the ground.

With a fearful oath Ben Hamed sprang to his feet, and, placing one foot upon the prostrate body of his horse, he struck furiously at the Christian; but Charles of Leon soon ended the conflict, for with a blow that seemed like the lightning's leap, he struck the upraised blade of the Moor's cimeter near the hilt, and broke it in twain.

The shouts of the multitude could no longer be restrained, and, as they broke on the air, the Alcalde was utterly overcome by the rage and mortification that had seized him.

His horse was so much sprained that it was with difficulty the animal could be set upon his feet, and then the beast limped away from the lists for fifteen minutes.

Charles of Leon kept the lists, and no one appeared against him.

"Shall we pronounce the Christian the victor?" at length said the king, as the repeated calls of the herald remained unanswered.

"The Christian cannot receive the scarf!" cried Ben Hamed, who had taken a place near the royal seat, where a doctor was dressing the wound upon his shoulder.

The king hesitated, and he showed by his manner that he liked not to bestow the badge upon the Christian.

"The Christian is a true knight, and knighthood should know no foreign blood!" cried an old Moslem warrior, who sat near the king.

"The Christian is the true victor!" cried a dozen voices.

"Then he shall receive the reward," said the king. Then turning to a fair young being who sat near him, he added, "Zehra, if you deem the Christian worthy, give him the badge."

It was a lovely girl to whom the king spoke—one who had just blushed into womanhood, with all the roses of beautiful youth still clustering about her.

She waved her hand to Charles of Leon, and he came near to her and knelt before her.

"Sir Knight," she said, with a sweet smile, "to you I award the gift that has thus fallen to my bestowal. While it remains in your possession, forget not the duty you owe to your honourable knighthood, nor her who bestowed it."

The scarf was of blue silk, richly wrought with threads of gold, and as Zehra spoke, she threw it over the knight's shoulders. As Charles of Leon rose to his feet, he gazed for a moment into the features of the fairy being.

She smiled upon him, and she blushed while she smiled.

When the young Christian turned from the spot, he fel in his heart that he could never forget the fair donor or the badge he had won.

Her countenance had burst upon his sight as breaks the view of the distant spring upon the thirsty traveller of the desert. He did not notice the look of Ben Hamed, nor did he see how the king was moved. He saw only the bright beams of Zehra's loveliness, and he forgot that life had its losses as well as its gains.

"By San Dominic," uttered Pedro, as he rode away from the scene of the tournament with his master, "you have made one enemy, at least."

"How so, Pedro?"

"The Alcalde will never forgive you."

"Then he is not a good knight."

"You are blind, Sir Charles. Didn't you ever know of wicked knights in Leon?"

"Yes."

"Then you may expect to find some here. San Jago! but it didn't seem very hard for the girl to decide against her father."

"Father! what do you mean?" uttered the knight, with a sudden start.

"Why, didn't you know that Zehra was the Alcalde's daughter?"

"No."

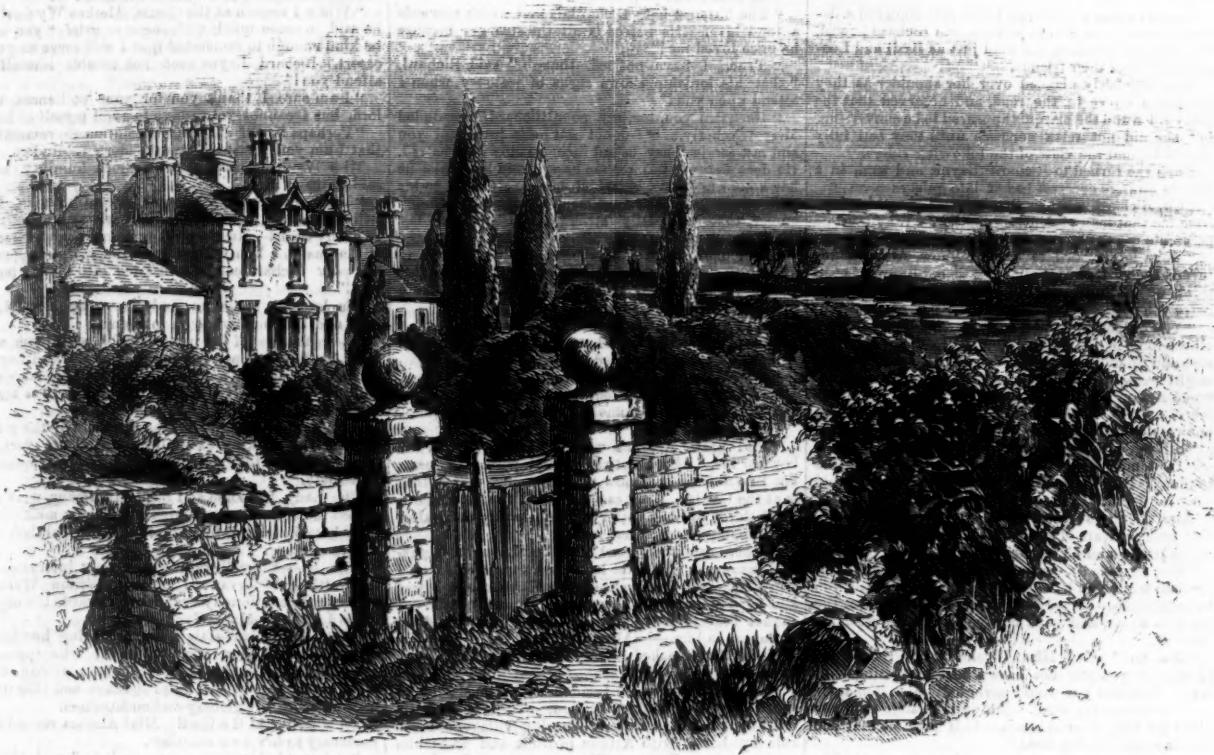
"She is, then."

"Are you sure of this?"

"Certainly. I heard the people speaking of her before the combat was ended."

Charles of Leon rode on for some distance in silence. He seemed much moved by what he had heard, and disappointment was plainly written upon his brow. When he reached his hotel he put off his armour, and as soon as he was alone he set about looking over a number of papers that he took from his bosom, each of which bore the royal seal of Leon.

To be continued.



[THE FENS.]

THE HOUSE OF SECRETS.

BY LEON LEWIS.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Thou know'st how fearless is my trust in thee.
Miss Landon.

Ten thousand fears
Invented wild, ten thousand frantic views
Of horrid rivals, hanging on the charms
For which he melts in fondness, eat him up
With fervent anguish and consuming rage.

Thomson's "Seasons."

DURING the day that followed his observance of Natalie Alton, and the discovery of two Lady Leopoldes, as he in his own mind termed them, Basil Montmaur sought in vain a private interview with his betrothed.

On the morning of Lord Templecombe's departure, a ride was projected through the extensive park, and Basil resolved to seize upon the occasion to converse freely with the Lady Leopold.

The horses had been brought around, and the riders had begun to make their appearance when Richard Layne, splendidly mounted, rode up the avenue to join the party.

He assigned himself a position as escort to Miss Wycherly and Lady Ellen Haigh, the latter of whom was coquettishly attired in a scarlet habit and a cap with a drooping feather.

Sir Wilton Werner devoted himself to the Misses Braithwaite, and Basil rode beside Leopold.

In this order they set out for the park, but had scarcely started when the Marquis of Waldemere dashed after the party, upon his half-tamed steed, and took his station at the bridle-rein of Miss Alethea, who greeted him with a look of surprise and a nonchalant bow.

His lordship glowered fiercely at her in return, compressed his lips, and maintained a rigid silence.

As they rode leisurely into the broad road that intersected the park, Leopold and her lover lingered a little behind their companions, who were too much absorbed in their own pleasures to notice their delinquency.

The morning was one of those lovely summer mornings that amply atone for the cold winds and dreary rains that for months precede them.

The air was soft and fragrant with the breath of many flowers; and there was a romantic loveliness about the park with its lofty over-arching trees, its smooth, hard road flecked and dotted with little pools of sunlight, with the timid hares darting now and then

across the path of the gay riders, and the equally timid deer peering with their bright eyes from some leafy covert or sheltered glade.

"You look happy this morning, Basil," said the Lady Leopold, shyly.

"I am happy, dear Leopold," responded Montmaur, with a smile. "And yet not much more so than I have been every hour and minute since that blessed day on which you accepted me as your future husband."

"Every hour and minute! Then you did not grieve much over my supposed inconstancy?" and the maidens laughed and blushed.

"I did not really doubt you for one moment, Leopold, but I feared that you were a somnambulist. I have learned better now!"

The Lady Leopold looked up at her lover with a startled and inquiring glance, and he said:

"I refer to your explanations of yesterday, dearest Leo. It was indeed a relief to me to learn that the earl's midnight visitor was a stranger. How marvellously she resembled you, though! I do not wonder that even I, who know you so well, was deceived by that resemblance! She was a copy of yourself, done in fainter colours."

"You must not flatter me so, Basil," interrupted the maiden, who greatly admired the gentle loveliness of her unacknowledged sister. "Some day you shall know the whole secret!"

"In your own good time, darling," was the gallant response. "I trust you too fully to desire an explanation before you shall be entirely ready to give it. If I can only convince myself that I was not the victim of an illusion——"

"Perhaps it will aid the conviction if you relate again your discovery, Basil."

Thus encouraged, the lover went on to relate the second time how he had followed Natalie downstairs to the Lady Leopold's door; how he had seen his betrothed appear on the threshold, and embrace her lovely counterpart, drawing her into her room; and how he had then, amazed and bewildered, retired to his apartment to spend hours in vain endeavours to solve the mystery thus thrust upon his notice.

"You can hardly imagine my relief," he concluded, "to find that you were not walking in your sleep, my darling. That idea has haunted me for days, and I have more than once started up from my sleep in the fear that at that very moment you might be exposed to some danger from which I was powerless to save you!"

"Are you anxious to learn all about this young girl, Basil?"

"Not until you are quite ready to tell me, Leopold!"

He spoke with such simple faith and trust that Leopold was tempted to confide in him wholly.

She had great reliance upon his judgment and discretion, and she reflected that any secret that belonged to her might well be shared with her future husband.

"You deserve to be rewarded for your unquestioning faith in me, dear Basil," she said. "Meet me in the picture-gallery to-day at the hour the ladies usually take their siesta, and I will explain all that has seemed so mysterious to you. Remember that I shall be telling you a great secret!"

Montmaur promised to be punctual to his appointment, and thanked his betrothed with lover-like ardour.

From this subject their conversation drifted into other channels in perfect keeping with the glory of the morning scene.

No place in the world is so appropriate for lovers and lovers' talk as a wooded park, with smooth avenues, arching trees, the songs of birds, the odorous breathings of flowers, and the presence of the timid denizens of the wood.

Although the lovers could not clasp each other's hands, their eyes exchanged loving glances that were equally effective, and their lips breathed tender words that caused either heart to thrill with joy.

At length Leopold became conscious that they were falling too far behind their friends, and she proposed to Basil to join the party before their dilatoriness should be observed.

Montmaur assented, and they quickened their pace, soon coming up beside the Misses Braithwaite and the baronet.

Meanwhile, Miss Wycherly and the Lady Ellen Haigh had been the recipients of various polite attentions from Richard Layne, whose devotion to the former had been perhaps more marked, as his attentions to the latter had been more impressive.

The marquis had ridden gloomily beside them, without appearing to observe the gay interchange of ribaldry and sentiment, except by a farther contraction of his gloomy brows and a further compression of his stern lips.

Miss Wycherly occasionally appealed to him to settle some pretended dispute between her and Richard, and the pretty widow occasionally made some effort to dispel his lordship's gloom, but, though he answered each politely, he bestowed no apparent thought upon either.

Conscious that he furtively watched her every

change of expression, Miss Alethea was unwontedly gay and animated, at length challenging Richard Layne to a race.

She gave him a significant look that signified a desire to speak with him in private, and Richard bowed, and they dashed along the road just as Basil and Leopold rejoined their friends.

Miss Wycherly glanced over her shoulder as they reached a curve in the road, and observed that the Lady Ellen and the marquis appeared to be conversing, but she did not relax her pace until they had fully passed beyond the view of the following riders.

Then she turned to Richard Layne, and said, in a tone in strange contrast to her late gaiety:

"Oh, Richard, what shall I do? Will nothing turn from that man's relentless enmity? Why must he persecute me so?"

"Your lot is hard to bear, I know, Alethea," returned Richard, soothingly. "I do not know what to think of his lordship. Sometimes I doubt that he hates you!"

"You do not know him as I do. He hates me with all the force of his cruel nature. He delights to torture and humiliate me. He fought with you that he might break my heart! He watched me and discovered Arthur's existence, and then threatened to rob me of my boy! Oh, Richard, his hatred of me is the one passion of his life!"

"Strange!" mused Layne. "Is it not? What a mystery life is, and what a burden! If it were not for Arthur and you, I should pray for death!"

Miss Alethea's voice died away in a pitiful wail that brought tears of sympathy to the blue-honest eyes of her friend, and he pleaded:

"Don't grieve so, dearest Alethea. You cannot be desolate while you have Arthur and me, nor can you be unprotected. If you bid me do it, I will meet the marquis again, and wipe out your injuries with his blood!"

"No, no!" cried Miss Wycherly. "Promise me again that you will not have a hostile meeting with him! You said you would never harm him, Richard!"

"I will keep my word. But it is strange that you plead for him, dear Alethea. Is it possible that you feel any affection for him?"

A scarlet flush slowly mounted to the marble-like cheeks of the lady, her lips quivered with a strangely eager expression, and a glorious light glowed in her dusky eyes.

But only for a moment.

The soul that had flung off its guard, and had for one moment looked from every noble feature, as quickly submitted to the rigid lull ever kept upon it, and Miss Alethea was herself again.

"Affection for him!" she said, with scornful intonation. "Do you not know me better than that question implies, Richard Layne? Affection for the enemy whose persecutions have embittered my life? Affection for the hand that lies in wait to strike down my nearest and dearest, and crush me in the ruins of my few hopes? Affection for the man who insults, humiliates, and oppresses me? No! I hate him even as he hates me! Would that I could wring his heart as he once wrung mine! Would that I could place to his lips the bitter cup he has compelled me to drain!"

"You do, indeed, hate him!" exclaimed Richard, noting her bitter emphasis and flashing eyes. "I cannot blame you, dear Alethea. You would be more or less than human to regard him with any other sentiment than the deepest aversion. Why does he stay here? He must know how unwelcome is his presence!"

"He remains to torture me! He knows I dare not send him away—that in mercy to myself I must allow him to do as he pleases with the Castle and its inmates!"

"How changed he is!" said Layne, thoughtfully. "Years ago, when I was his dear friend and he was mine, there was not a braver, truer-hearted, nobler man in Christendom than Lord Waldemere. He was fiery and passionate, it is true, but the fire of his nature was bidden under the flower of gentleness and generosity—to use an appropriate comparison. Now he seems like a crouching tiger, and I am always dreading his spring!"

"And so am I!" sighed Miss Alethea, wearily. "I fear it may come at a moment when I shall be unprepared for self-defence! Oh, if he would only go away, and leave me with my boy! I am never alone with Arthur now, receiving the little fellow's caresses, or listening to his prattle, but I fancy I hear the marquis's stormy approach, to tear from me my little son!"

"My poor Alethea! I wish I might bear your griefs for you! Can you not conciliate his lordship? If you would plead to him to have pity on you and go away, he might depart. He surely cannot have lost all his old generosity!"

"I think he has. I cannot ask a favour of him, at any rate. I will never humble myself to him, to be

spurned by him. I do not know how otherwise to conciliate him."

"He once loved you, Alethea!"

"The bitterest hate, Richard, is that which succeeds a fond love. His hatred is all the stronger because he once loved me!"

"True. I have noticed, though," said Richard, "that his lordship shows signs of jealousy when I attend upon you!"

"He hates you, too, my poor Richard," responded Miss Wycherly. "I doubt not he is jealous of you and me, for jealousy is not incompatible with hatred. He does not want to see me happy, and he thinks he has a hold upon me, by which he can crush me to his will."

"I feel, sometimes, that I cannot resist much longer; that this daily struggle will soon end my life!"

She looked so pale as she made this dispairing utterance, that Richard felt a sudden pang at his heart—a sudden fear that her words might be a prophecy.

"Bear up, for Arthur's sake," he pleaded.

Miss Alethea brightened up at this allusion to her beloved boy, and responded:

"For his sake, I will try to bear up! Richard, Lord Waldemere even ventured to intrude into the other-chamber of my rooms the other evening—"

"How dared he?"

"And heard Arthur's voice! He saw neither the boy nor me. Alison got rid of him without a scene, but I do not feel safe now that he knows that Arthur is at the Castle. I can easily conceal the little fellow, but I think you had better take him away until after his lordship's departure."

"Where can I take him?" inquired Layne, in a puzzled manner. "I cannot leave you unprotected, and I know of no place where the boy will be safe or happy alone. The hidden cottage is, of course, unsafe. I cannot bear to put him with those who would be strangers to him.—Ah, I have it!"

Miss Alethea asked eagerly what plan he had devised.

"Why, I'll run up to London with him this evening, by way of Farley Station, which is a dozen miles distant from our neighbouring village. I can ride my horse, with Arthur in front, and have him sent over from Farley. Then we can spend a day or two in town, which I will improve by teaching Arthur to call me uncle, and to keep silent about you, and then we will return boldly enough to my house. The marquis would visit my place about the last in the world. I will introduce the boy to my house—sister as my nephew, and will keep him perfectly secluded!"

"I like your plan," commented Miss Alethea. "It will keep Arthur near me. If he should be ill, I can easily go to him. And if he should be homesick, you can bring him to me! As you say, Lord Waldemere would never visit your place. You will be sure to set out this evening for town?"

Layne assented, and the young mother proceeded to give him sundry charges as to the care of her darling, enjoining particular attention to his health.

"It will do Arthur good to be with me a month," observed Richard, with a smile. "You are making a mother's boy of him, Alethea."

"I want him to be one—poor little fellow!"

"But it won't hurt him to give his spirits play. It is bad for him to be so much in the house. I shall indulge him with a pony to ride about the lawn—a little Shetland, that will delight him. We have reason to be proud of Arthur, Alethea. It is no detriment to the little lad to say that he needs a father's restraining and guiding hand. I wish, for his sake, that I were not such a good-natured, easy-going fellow!"

Miss Wycherly uttered a sigh that was half a sob, but quickly conquered her emotion as she heard the sound of an approaching horseman.

Glancing over her shoulder, she beheld Lord Waldemere advancing at a rapid pace, Lady Helen Haigh having deserted him for the Lady Leopoldine.

It was singular to observe how quickly Miss Wycherly resumed her mask of gaiety at his approach, and how animated her manner became as she addressed some laughing observation to Richard.

Before he had time to reply, the marquis had gained the lady's side.

There was a scowl upon his face as he said, sternly:

"Miss Wycherly can dispense with your escort, Mr. Layne. I will attend her!"

Richard flushed angrily, and turned to Miss Alethea, who said, gaily:

"I will ride on with his lordship, Richard. I imagine the Lady Helen is uttering gentle anathemas upon me for having robbed her of her cavalier!"

After a quick scrutiny of her face, Richard's brow cleared, he bowed courteously, and rode leisurely back towards the advancing party.

Lord Waldemere shot a quick and furtive glance at

Miss Wycherly's face, but it had never been more cold and haughty than at that moment, and his brow became corrugated as he noted the fact.

"While I remain at the Castle, Alethea Wycherly," he said, in tones quick with anger or grief, "you will be kind enough to remember that I will serve as your escort. Richard Layne need not trouble himself to attend you!"

"I am sure I thank you for your politeness, my lord, but I cannot yet resolve to avail myself of it!"

"Perhaps it will aid your resolution to remember that I am your master," was the stern rejoinder.

Miss Wycherly bowed with mock humility, and said, sarcastically:

"Your argument is too potent for contradiction. We will understand, then, that you are always, hereafter, to be my escort—always so long as my guests remain at the Castle. You will go with the rest, I suppose, and poor Richard can be reinstated into his old position!"

His lordship made no reply, save by a wrathful look, and the couple rode on in silence.

The remainder of the party came up with them, and Miss Alethea resumed her gaiety, but Richard Layne marked that she did not speak a word to the marquis, and that she met him only so much as was absolutely demanded by common politeness.

As they rode homewards, the members of the party presented a striking exemplification of the various hopes and fears that actuate each individual member of society.

The Lady Leopoldine and Basil Montmaur were absorbed in each other, yet mindful to show nothing of their love, in look or tone, that could reveal their secret to another.

The Misses Braithwaite were deeply interested in the riddling observations of Sir Wilton Werner, whose gaze continually wandered towards the object of his devotion—Miss Wycherly.

The Lady Helen Haigh was practising her innocent witcheries upon Richard Layne, who appeared to be a willing victim to them; and in strong contrast to all the others, Miss Alethea and the marquis were fitfully gloomy and constrained.

On arriving at the Castle, Miss Alethea retired immediately to her own chamber.

"A letter has come for you, my lady," said Alison, after admitting her. "It was brought by a lad, who had orders to give it into my hands. I think it is from Farmer Perkins."

She produced a scholarly-looking missive from her pocket, which Miss Wycherly hastened to read before even throwing off her riding-cap.

As the waiting-woman had suspected, the letter was from the ex-schoolmaster.

It announced that his young guest had left the hidden cottage that morning; that she had bidden them an affectionate adieu, saying, that she was going away with a friend; and that she had requested Mr. Perkins to write to Miss Wycherly, thanking her for all her kindness and sympathy to her, in her need. He added that his young guest had gone away in excellent spirits, and that she expected soon to return.

"This is very singular!" said Miss Wycherly, when she had concluded. "Ah! perhaps she has followed Vane to London! She is afraid to lose sight of him even for a few days. Besides, seeing him depart this morning, she had no means of knowing that he would return to-morrow. It is rather inexplicable this absence of Natalie's, but I am sure it is all right!"

She refolded the letter, putting it in her pocket for the perusal of Leopoldine, and then said, in an unsteady voice:

"Alison, I am going to send Arthur away for the present; Mr. Layne will take charge of him until the marquis shall have left the Castle!"

"You have decided well, my lady," replied the waiting-woman, wiping a tear from her eyes. "Master Arthur is safe enough here, but this constant anxiety is wearing you out. You look already like a ghost!"

Miss Wycherly smiled faintly, and arose, saying:

"I must go now to prepare my boy for his journey and the different life before him. Do not let me see you weep, Alison, or his may refuse to leave me. We must make this last day very pleasant!"

Going into the inner chamber, she threw off her habit, made a careful toilet, and then opened the secret door, ascending to the concealed chambers.

CHAPTER XXIV.

It was in this lone valley she would charm.

Campbell.

With a heart new-fired I follow you,
To do I know not what. But it sufficeth
That Brutus leads me on.

Shakespeare.

"The Fens" was appropriately named. It consisted of a small estate, principally swampy land, and

a dreary old house, out of repair, that stood in the midst of a neglected and weed-grown garden. The house belonged to no particular class of architecture, but looked roomy, rambling away into a couple of wings of lower elevation than the central building. Its principal feature was its large number of chimneys, finished by round red chimney pots that gave something of a manufacturing look to that portion of the dwelling. There was no ornament about the windows; the porches were of the plainest stamp; and the brick facings had a generally faded look.

There was no lawn to impart an air of dignity to the Fens, although the house stood at considerable distance from the road. There was a kitchen garden and a colony of outhouses at the back, and a good-sized paddock at one side.

The remainder of the "estate" was mostly marshy fields where noxious vegetation grew rankly, where malaria was bred, and reptiles flourished undisturbed.

Beyond or rather through the midst of these fields, wound sullenly a dark stream, which though narrow was deep, and which leisurely took its way to the sea, a glimpse of which was visible in the distance.

There were no neighbouring dwellings, the locality being deemed unhealthy, and any tenant of the Fens would therefore be doomed to perfect seclusion, unless they chose to consort with the inmate of a little tumble-down cottage that stood a little way in the rear of the outhouses.

Why anyone should have made a home in such a spot was the wonder of the few people who now and then passed along that lonely road.

It had been built in the time of the civil wars, by a mortal ancestor of Sir Wilton Werner, who had for many reasons chosen to withdraw himself from all contact with the world, and who found, in this miasmatic spot, not only the concealment he required, but a speedy grave.

The agents of the present owner had always found it difficult to obtain a tenant for the place, even at the nominal rent demanded. Few could be found poor enough to take possession of the dwelling, furnished though it was; and fewer still could be induced to remain there when they discovered how totally they were shut out from the world, how fever-laden were the breezes that swept up from the fens, and how barren and desolate was the entire surrounding scenery.

Sir Wilton Werner had for a long time ceased to order repairs, rightly judging that the money they would cost would be worse than thrown away, and it now appeared probable that the house would before many years become a ruin, which would attract a larger number of visitors than it had been able to do in its prosperity.

This, then, was the home offered for Natalie Afton by her husband's friend!

The housekeeper, in whose charge it was, was a deaf old woman, who had spent her early years in service at the Fens, whose husband had been gardener, and whose sons had filled various useful posts about the place. Her infirmity caused her to prefer an isolated existence, and her attachment to the old house was remarkable, having in it something of the blind, unreasoning affection such as is felt for places by the inferior animals.

She had given up her cottage as untenable and had taken possession of the housekeeper's room at the Fens, gathering around her all that could make life desirable to her, and here she dreamed away her days, dozing and knitting, and muttering to herself of her youthful days when the house echoed with gay voices and laughter.

She was a common-place old woman, with an impulsive face, and dull eyes, as if she had ceased to take note of the trifling events that alone took place around her, and lived in the scenes of the far past.

Habited in a dark stuff gown, with a clean white kerchief folded across her bosom, with her well-starched cap standing away from her face, and with a blue yarn stocking in the process of knitting between her fingers, the old woman sat one summer afternoon by one of the windows of her room.

The chamber was an old-fashioned one, with a tall clock ticking lazily in the corner, a rush matting covering the floor, rush-bottomed chairs ranged with arithmetical regularity against the white-washed walls, and a great cat reposing on the threshold of the open door, leisurely winking its great yellow eyes at the audacious flies.

The window by which the old woman sat looked upon the paddock, and beyond that upon a stretch of moor, which to her eyes was a finer sight than mountain or valley.

"A strange world!" muttered the old woman, en-gaging in her usual habit of talking to herself, and repeating her favourite observation, "A strange world! I never saw one like it! Now, there was Miss Edith, she that was engaged to that baronet, and that everyone called Lady Edith, on account of her grand ways,

and that I was own maid to; she married a gentleman as poor as a church mouse, and died in childbed. Poor thing! I think I see her now! Many's the time I heard her beg her papa to move away from the Fens, for she knew she should die here. She had a strange fancy that the place was unhealthy and the air bad. Curious notion! I don't see nothin' the matter with the air, and I've lived here seventy years—leastways, sixty-nine! Or is it seventy now?"

Pausing in her task, she proceeded to solve the question, counting upon her fingers, finally muttering, in a tone of satisfaction:

"I knew I was right. I've lived here seventy-five years, just as I said! If the air had been so bad, I shouldn't have been near so old! Now, let me see. The Lady Edith's daughter was Miss Katherine—Bonny Kate they called her. I was housekeeper in her time. What a merry, gay young lady she was, to be sure! How she used to ride her harem-scarem horse over yon moor, and through the fens to the sea! But she had the same uncountable notion that the air was bad. Inherited it, perhaps. She went to a grand school and came home with lots of knowledge. One day she came to this very room, and 'Elspeth,' says she, 'I can prove to you that swamps are unhealthy.' That's the idea, if I don't exactly remember the words. But she couldn't prove it, at least to my satisfaction, though she said something about gases, or was it acids, now?"

This point demanded settlement, and obtained it, before the old woman resumed:

"Miss Kate used to say sometimes she wished her great grand'her—or was it farther back than that?—had been taken by the soldiers of the other side before he ever built this place, which wasn't no better, she said, than a Lazar-house—a Lazarus, I think she said. Well, she married a baronet, Sir George Werner, and went to live at his grand place—I forgot its name. And the Fens was let to strangers. Them that was born and raised here, the owners of the place, cared less for it than old Elspeth did. Curious idea about not liking the air! As good as anybody's, so far as I can see!" And the old woman snuffed at the breeze that came in the window.

"I don't see nothin' the matter o' that. Some folks are too particular for this world. If there's any acid in that air, I'd like to know it!" and Elspeth looked around her triumphantly, as if she had uttered an unanswerable argument. "I wish Miss Kate could have lived to a found out her mistake. But it 'twan't to be. Providence took her off from her fine house, and her servants and her jewelry, and her little boy, that was named Wilton, after the Wiltons of the Fens, and they do say she was glad to go. She had lost her spirits after her death, along of the dissolution of her husband. They do say he was the dissolutest fellow in the country. He lived ten years longer'n she did, and broke his neck in a steeple-chase at last, which was not the end to be expected of a gentleman of quality!"

"And the Fens belongs to Sir Wilton now. He ain't like his poor ma's family. The Wiltons was always a generous, open-handed set, and Miss Kate was a Wilton all through! And he must belong to a different genius from his par, for he don't ride steeple-chases, as I hear on! Pity he don't get married and come here to live. If he could find a sensible woman that never heard of acids in swamps, we might look for the old days again!"

With this, the old lady looked out again upon the moor, and the road that wound through it, soon uttering an exclamation of surprise.

She had caught sight of an advancing vehicle.

"Deary me!" she exclaimed, in pleased excitement, "praps my wish has proved true. Somebody's certainly coming here, for nobody travels this way now less they stop here. Like's not it's the master, or praps the agent. But no, it can't be, for he always comes a horseback. 'T's true as I'm a living woman, it's Sir Wilton and his bride!"

With some difficulty the old woman arose from her high-backed chair, put her knitting-work into a bag that hung at her side, and consulted a small mirror, by whose aid she gave a neater finish to the wide frill framing her face.

And then she took a key from a nail, and proceeded through a narrow passage to the wide hall that led to the front entrance, unlocked and opened the front door, and stood upon the steps muttering garrulously to herself.

But a few minutes elapsed before the design of the occupants of the vehicle was made known, the carriage turning into the garden, and approaching the house over the remains of ancient flower-beds.

The old woman rubbed her spectacles energetically, and placed them astride her nose, determined to take a thorough survey of her master, whom she had last seen in his boyhood.

The carriage drove quite up to the porch, and the housekeeper saw that its occupants were a gentleman and lady.

As the reader knows, they were Lord Templecombe and Natalie.

The young wife, though she wore a fatigued look, seemed strangely happy and joyful.

Her blue eyes beamed as brightly and as free from clouds as the sky above her, and her voice had a ringing mirth, to which of late it had been a stranger.

The secret of this change lay in the fact that the earl had been playing the part of the devoted lover, in order to lull any suspicions she might entertain, and to gratify his awakening fancy for her.

He sprang lightly upon the porch, and lifted her from the vehicle, whispering:

"Welcome to the Fens, little wife! You are now to be installed in one of your husband's homes. It will not be long before you will be the recognized mistress of all that he owns!"

Natalie was too happy to notice at that moment any of the peculiarities of the place, and she answered:

"I know I shall be happy here, Vane. Any place would be pleasant if it were shared with you!"

The earl had noticed the housekeeper, and now turned to address her, desiring to explain matters to her before she could betray the fact that he was not the legal master of the place.

But Natalie hung upon his arm and he was puzzled what to say.

"This is Elspeth Done?" he asked, politely.

The housekeeper did not hear a word he said, but she was conscious that he addressed her. Labouring under the conviction that he was Sir Wilton, she courtesied deeply, and said:

"Welcome to the Fens, master, and welcome to your young bride!"

His lordship was surprised at this reception, and Natalie murmured:

"Dear Elmer! You have prepared her for our coming, and she receives me as your wife! You are even kinder than you promised to be!"

"Your lady is very bonny!" said old Elspeth, with the garrulous familiarity of old age. "She'll be happy at the Fens, I don't doubt, and she'll find that old Elspeth is a good housekeeper yet. Come in, and dinner shall be prepared for you in no time!"

The earl bade her lead the way, but she did not obey until the command was pointed by a gesture, and she then walked into the dwelling.

Comprehending the situation of affairs and their favourable attitude towards himself, his lordship said:

"You see, Natalie, that the housekeeper is as deaf as a post. Her memory is failing her rapidly, too, but she is a faithful creature, with a wonderful attachment to this place. I hope you will like her!"

"I am sure I shall!"

"She lived once in the family of a baronet, I believe, and she has a habit now of addressing everyone by that baronet's title—so I understand. But that is a trifling fault!"

The caution was well-timed, for old Elspeth flung open the door of the drawing-room, ushering in her guest, with the remark:

"You see that I'm prepared for you, Sir Wilton. The agent was here some weeks ago, and he said you thought of coming this way before a great while. He didn't tell me you was going to bring a bride with you," and the old woman chuckled. "I got all ready for you. So far as provisions are concerned you couldn't a come at a better time. You see, I've got one son, a sailor, and the things he do bring me from Injin! Them heathens can't do mought but eat dainties! But as I was saying, you don't look a bit like your ma, Sir Wilton. And you look younger'n I calculated, though, to be sure, Miss Kate's son oughtn't to be very old. I'll see to the dinner."

"A luncheon is all that is needed!" said the earl, in his loudest tones. "We have dined already at the town ten miles back!"

"True!" assented Elspeth, "we don't keep a French cook as you say; but I'll make due allowances. If you'd only let me known, I could have filled the house with servants!"

With a deep courtesy, she withdrew, leaving the husband and wife alone.

"What a funny old woman!" laughed Natalie. "How much she seems to think of you, Vane! It seems very odd that she should call you Sir Wilton, doesn't it?"

"I explained that, you know," said the earl, hastily.

"This room isn't at all bad!" exclaimed the young wife, surveying it with a critical eye. "Everything looks new or well kept. But I remember you said it had been recently let!"

Natalie was disposed to be pleased with everything in the home to which her husband had brought her, and the earl thought her disposition much to be commended, for everything looked dull to him, after his stay at Wyckley Castle.

The drawing-room was long and low, panelled in

dark wood, enlivened with gilt, and furnished with mahogany and crimson satin. The carpet was of Brussels, of gay colours; the curtains of crimson satin, like the chair and sofa covers; and the old pictures had been newly framed in gilt.

There was nothing to find fault with in this, but the earl had been accustomed to fancy woods, baulk and marquetry, and the drawing-room at the Fens looked very plain to him.

But the view from the windows was gloomy enough to depress even Natalie.

There was nothing agreeable to rest the eye upon in the weed-grown garden, in the fence beyond of white palings, in the road that ran like a serpent across the moor and marsh and beside the dark, sluggish stream.

What could have induced anybody to build a house on this spot?" was the young wife's very natural question.

"A desire for concealment during the wars, I believe!"

"The desire was of course obtained. Nobody would look for a refugee in this spot, I should think. But the moor is not so bad, Elmer. I shall love to wander there every day!"

The earl wondered at the taste of his bride, but he did not express the feeling in words, not wishing to mar her contentment.

"Make the best you can of the place, Natalie," he observed. "Your probation here will not be for long. Suppose we make a survey of the interior of the house. I will pick out the room you are to inhabit in my absence, so that I can imagine you sitting at your window looking for my coming!"

"Playing 'Sister Mary,' in the story of Bluebeard," said the young wife, gaily. "We shall have plenty of time to become familiar with the place before old Elspeth shall have prepared dinner. You said, I believe, that you had not been here for years?"

"Not for many years. The place will seem as new and curious to me as to you, Natalie, so let us hasten our researches."

Natalie assented, and they examined the drawing-room floor, then proceeding upstairs.

The rooms were all quaint and old-fashioned, panelled in oak, black with age, and furnished in ancient style.

Natalie expressed her admiration at everything she beheld, having a veneration for time-honoured things, but her husband wore an expression that would have been highly appropriate to a martyr, as he forced himself to assent to her pleased exclamations.

But at length he came upon a room that suited him.

It had evidently been a lady's boudoir, and though the first gloss had worn away, its prettiness had not vanished.

The walls were panelled with pale blue silk, and the curtains were of the same material. The carpet was white, sprinkled with blue forget-me-nots, and the furniture was enamelled white, and painted with bouquets of blue flowers.

"What a lovely room!" cried the young wife. "I choose this room for my own. Look, Elmer! There's a piano!" and she ran forward to look at it.

The earl followed her and opened it that she might play upon it, seating himself to listen to her music.

Natalie played only simple tunes, but she accompanied them with a fresh and sweet young voice, that even her husband could not help admiring and enjoying.

After giving him a few Scottish songs, she arose, examining:

"Oh, Elmer, I am delighted with this place! I shall play constantly upon this dear old piano. How happy I am!"

By way of emphasizing this declaration, she danced about the room airily, lummung a gay waltz.

"Now you are like yourself, Natalie!" said his lordship, admiringly. "If you want to keep me always your slave, be as gay and witching as you are now!"

The young wife laughed merrily, and danced off to the opposite side of the room.

"I really believe I love you more than ever, Elmer," she said, smiling. "I am sure I shall, if you keep up your kindness. Now let us go downstairs, for Elspeth won't know where to find us!"

The earl arose, and they descended the stairs to the drawing-room, where they whiled away the time in converse until the housekeeper made her appearance, announcing that dinner was ready.

"Tain't what you've a right to expect, Sir Wilton," she said, conducting them to the dining-room, "but I can't do no better on short notice. To-morrow we'll have a good cook and a staff of servants. Won't it seem like the old times come back?" and her eyes brightened. "I shall almost expect to see the Lady Edith step in. Here we are, my lady!"

She ushered the earl and his wife into a long, low dining-room, fitted up with side-boards and buffets, &c.

The windows looking upon the moor were opened wide, and a little round table, laid for two, stood near them.

"How cosy this is!" murmured Natalie, as the earl seated her at the little table. "How much pleasanter than to dine in state—is it not?"

His lordship smiled assent.

The dinner proved to be better than the guests expected—consisting of broiled moor-fowl, vegetables, &c.; succeeded by jellies and confections, in lieu of pastry, and oranges, and cakes. An excellent dish of coffee finished the repast.

The earl, despite the fact of having recently dined, brought a good appetite to the tempting meal, and his enjoyment was greatly increased by the presence and chatter of his young wife. Her animated face, surrounded by glancing, glimmering curls, gave an aesthetic character to the entertainment, and more than once he caught himself wishing that she were of birth and fortune equal to his own.

"In that case," he thought, "her fate would have been very different! I would have wedded her and been proud to own her as my wife! But what is the use of dwelling upon impossibilities?"

Old Elspeth, with unsuspecting energy, waited upon the couple, indulging in her garrulities to the utmost, quite unconscious of the occasional impatient exclamations with which the earl greeted her remarks.

"I do declare," said the good old soul, in her joy, "my lady do have a look like some family I've seen, but I can't tell which. Ah! she's like yourself, Sir Wilton, only prettier, as is natural, seeing that she is a lady. Your hair is pale, and hers is true gold-colour; your eyes are light, and hers is blue, as blue can be; your complexion is light too, and hers is as white and clear as a snow-drop! Yet you look alike! Is my lady a Werner, too, Sir Wilton?"

"No!" replied the earl, shaking his head.

"Well, I declare! I should a' took her to be! I thought your hair was black, Sir Wilton, like bonny Miss Kate's! When you was a boy—but, la! people change. Talking of Miss Kate makes me think of the aye here. Do you notice anything the matter of it, my lady?"

"It doesn't seem very pure!" replied Natalie, in her loudest tones.

"There! I knew, the minute I set eyes on your bonny face, that you'd say the air was good! You don't 'teet no acid in it?"

"Acid in the air! What can she mean, Elmer?"

"I know no better than yourself, Natalie!"

"Just as I thought!" declared Elspeth, not understanding a word spoken by either of her guests, but imagining that she did of course, "there ain't no acid in it. Is your ladyship going to remain here?"

Natalie bowed assent.

"Then the blue room must be got ready. I've got help enough for to-day. My grand-darter lives with me. Her father, my son, that I named George the Third—well, he died in Injy. He was a soldier, while my other son took to be a sailor. My grand-darter is a great help, though a little soft!" and Elspeth touched her forehead significantly. "I ain't seen her since mornin'. She has a great trick of staying off on the moor all day!"

"I am glad to hear, Elspeth," shouted the earl, "that you have a grand-daughter here to help you. I shall not engage any other servants here, but bring them up from London. I must go back to-day, but my lady will remain here in my absence!"

By dint of repetitions and increased volume of voice, his lordship succeeded in making the old woman understand his wishes, and she agreed to obey them to the best of her ability, being wonderfully pleased because Natalie was to be left at the Fens.

The repast finished, the earl conducted his bride back to the drawing-room, and declared to her that he must now hasten to town, whence he would send her all needful instructors.

"Be happy and contented here, Natalie!" he enjoined upon her. "And on no account leave this retreat until I shall summon you hence, or come for you. I shall run up here often to see you and watch your improvement. Remember now—your fate is in your own hands! It depends entirely upon yourself whether I present you to the world as my wife or not!"

"I will do my best to please you, Elmer!"

"I do not doubt the fact, little wife. You love me still, I can see, and I love you better than ever before. I shall think of you in this pleasant and retired spot, as happy with your books and thoughts of me, and it will not be long before I shall come to carry you away to my ancestral home!"

Natalie, thus worked upon, mentally resolved to carry out her husband's wishes, and not to communicate with her friends at the Castle during her probation at the Fens.

She looked forward hopefully to the time when she should visit them, her husband at her side, as their equal in worldly position.

In the glow of returning hope, she forgot her late

distrust of his lordship, and the bitterness she had encouraged against him disappeared like dew in the sun before his returning favour.

The earl spent an hour or more in endeavours to vivify the old love and kindle it into increased fervour, but at last he arose to take his departure.

Folding his young wife in his arms, he gave her a final embrace and his last injunctions, and went out to his vehicle, which remained as he had left it, the horse being secured in the shade of a tree.

Natalie followed him upon the porch, and looked tearfully and wistfully after him as he drove across the garden into the road, but she smiled as he glanced back, saluting her with a bow and throwing her a caress.

Old Elspeth watched his departure from the garden, muttering her glee because he had left behind him his bonny young bride to make the Fens ring again with its old mirth.

"A troublesome business off my hands!" mused the earl, as he drove rapidly over the moor. "Natalie is safely caged and will remain so, if I am a judicious jailer. With promises and flattery I can keep her here until she reads the announcement of my marriage to the Lady Leopolda. As this task is attended to, I must now devote my attention to winning my cousin from Montmaur!"

Natalie continued to gaze after her recrurent husband until his vehicle had become a mere speck upon the moor, and then she thought:

"How strangely things happen! An Earl of Templecombe brought trouble and shame upon the Aftons, and an Earl of Templecombe will restore their name to its former proud position. A lord of Templecombe brought my mother to an unhonoured grave, and his successor will raise her daughter to the level of the proudest in the land. It will be a strange yet ample atonement!"

(To be continued.)

THE following is a calculation of what the weather will be in all probability up to the close of the year:—October: 16th, fair if north-west wind, rain if south or south-west; 23rd, very rainy; 30th, changeable. November: 7th, cold high wind; 15th, fair and mild; 22nd, cold high wind; 29th, snow and stormy. December: 7th, snow and stormy; 21st to 31st, fair and frost if wind at north or north-east, rain or snow if wind at south or south-west.

STRANGE FREAK OF A SOMNAMBULIST.—Some time since a strange visitor arrived at Greenhow Hill. It appears some miners were going to their work, and on approaching the limekilns at Duck-street, they thought they saw a man come out of the kiln horn. They concluded that he was drunk, and had undressed himself there. Presently the man walked back into the kiln horn. They then went up to him, and found him to present a strange appearance. His face and body were quite red with exposure to the weather and to the heat of the limekiln, and his feet were cut and bleeding. The man seemed completely bewildered and lost. One of the miners questioning him, he said his name was Myers, that he came from Darley, and had walked from there in his sleep during the night. When he had left home he could not tell; when he awoke he found himself in the kiln horn, and the only way he could account for it was that he was in the habit of loading lime from those kilns, and he must have thought that he was coming for lime. Some clothes were procured for him, and he was taken home in a conveyance. He had walked a distance of six miles on a rough and stony road, and in rain and darkness.

SMOKING IN RAILWAY CARRIAGES.—A strange announcement was recently made at the half-yearly meeting of the London, Brighton, and South Coast Company. We had always hitherto supposed that the distinction as regards first, second, and third class passengers related exclusively to the quality of the accommodation provided. The first-class passengers pay for a stuffed seat, a stuffed back, a handsome rug, elbow swings, &c. The second-class passengers pay for a stuffed seat in American cloth, so-called, but without stuffed back to the seat, excepting in some cases a mere stuffed bar, and they (the second-class) are always minus the rug. The third-class passengers have to submit to honest painted deal, both for side and back. These graduated payments are, of course, for each of the several classes of accommodation, and of that no one can reasonably complain; but some classes of travellers may reasonably and indignantly complain when the chairman of an important company officially lays down the law that second and third-class passengers—no matter what their age, their state of health, or sex may be—must submit to the annoyance of smoking. Yet this is the dictum of the recently appointed chairman of the London, Brighton, and South Coast Railway. He deliberately states that smokers may take the second or third-class compartments, and that there they would be "perfectly welcome to smoke."



[MATAMORAS.]

THE MEXICAN DIFFICULTY.

GREAT men make great mistakes. The very last example of this fact is, perhaps, the failure of Louis Napoleon in founding, *et ceteris*, a bran-new empire and dynasty in the land of the unfortunate Montezuma.

Sad, unhappy indeed, has been the fate of one of the richest and most beautiful countries in the world; a land embracing nearly every climate, as it rises from the low land, or *Tierra Caliente*, by the sea-shore, to the *Tierra Templada*, or temperate region, and the *Tierra Frigida*, or cold region, the table-land on the summit of that back-bone of the American continent, the Andes, and descends again to the valley of Mexico proper, the oldest city in America (the Tenochtitlan of the Aztecs).

The original city, which stood on a plain 7,470 feet above the level of the sea, was founded by the Mexicans, or rather Aztecs, in 1325, and was situated in the valley, on a group of islands, on Lake Tezcuco, and connected with the mainland by three principal dykes or causeways formed of stone and earth. How wondrous was the peculiar civilization of the Aztecs; their wealth in the precious metals, and their aptitude in the fine arts are a schoolboy story, told in every hornbook. Its conquest by Cortez and a few hundreds of Spaniards is, as told by Bernal Diaz (one of the conquerors), unequalled by anything in fiction.

The Spaniards, however, ruthless robbers and murderers as they were, sowed seeds that have fructified in centuries of anarchy and bloodshed; for from the year 1521, when Cortez completed his conquest, the unhappy land has known no peace. For a long time governed by Spanish satraps in the name of the sovereign of Spain, the descendants of the conquerors found the yoke so irksome that in 1820 they unsolved the connection with their mother country.

In 1822 it was acknowledged independent, and was governed by an emperor. In 1824 the form of government was changed into that of a federal republic, with the legislative power vested in a general congress, consisting of a senate and chamber of deputies. In 1835 Santa Anna, a successful general, changed the federal into a central republic. In 1848 its armies were beaten by those of the United States, to which it was forced to yield upwards of 530,000 square miles of territory. In 1851 further concessions were made to the United States, which, by having obtained a portion of the valley of Massilia, has secured command of the Pacific, and by forming a railway through this valley, can unite the Atlantic with the Pacific.

From the foregoing résumé of the history of this unfortunate land, it is not difficult to understand the chagrin of our American cousins when Louis Napoleon, after his successful intervention in Mexico in '62, determined to establish an empire, with an Austrian archduke for its head; nor is it difficult, keeping in mind their mania as regards the "Monroe doctrine," viz., that of annexing the whole continent, to understand that the Government of the United States would seize the first opportunity of quarrelling with the chief of the new empire. Hence the—in diplomatic parlance—"Matamoras difficulty." Let, however, the Americans speak for themselves. One of their leading journalists writes:

"The port of Matamoras is one of those which Maximilian some time since declared under blockade. The proclamation enforcing a blockade was supported by no efficient naval force, and President Johnson has declared this blockade, so far as the United States are concerned, 'absolutely null and void.' President Johnson's proclamation says virtually to the pseudo-Emperor: 'You have undertaken under foreign auspices to manage Mexican affairs. We of the United States happen to have a more intimate concern in those affairs than any European nation can have. We have made the necessary arrangements to secure the withdrawal of the troops by which thus far you have succeeded in supporting a false position. Your temporary success has been a menace to republican institutions on this continent. In the meantime we shall not become a party to your scheme of foreign intervention by supporting or recognizing any mere paper blockade which you may think proper to institute.'

Notwithstanding this American view of Mexican affairs, few right-thinking people who know the inordinate lust for territory and the extreme jealousy of royal institutions entertained by the Americans will regret that magnificent Mexico has not at last become settled under a firm government.

The fact, however, is that the Imperial Government of Mexico is bankrupt. It owes many millions to France, and, what is worse, wants to borrow more; and that the French chambers can't lend it is to be regretted, for although Mexico owes, perhaps, ten years' income, by that measure her debt is not so great a debt as our own. But the income of Mexico under a strong and successful administration would be very largely in excess of its reputed revenue twenty-five years ago. There is no country in this world so stored with natural riches—or so favourably situated for turning these treasures to account.

So precious, in fact, and indispensable are the pro-

ducts of Mexican territory that even political anarchy could not drive away trade from the country. Many a reader has, perhaps, wondered why, when there was not only no encouragement to commerce but no security even for property or life, foreign merchants should still settle in Mexico. The spirit of trade, however, and the chance of gain, will carry men anywhere; and nowhere in the world should there be a more valuable trade than in the territories of Maximilian. The chief supply of one of the precious metals comes from Mexico. The mines, however, of Potosí and other districts are no longer worked to any sufficient purpose, while no enterprise is applied to the discovery of new deposits. If Mexico were but "prospected" with as much pains as California, it would probably yield even richer returns.

The descriptions given to the French chambers on the proposal of the second loan were not in the least exaggerated as regards the actual resources and capabilities of the empire. Mexico might easily enough become all that was said of her; in fact, had the political improvement been but established, the financial solvency would have quickly followed. America is the natural resort of immigrants, and Mexico has the most attractive territories in America. Maximilian actually offered land, privileges, and encouragements of every kind to settlers either from Europe or the States. There is land enough and to spare for any number of immigrants. Mexico has about twenty times the area of England, and about three times the population of Middlesex. With all its natural treasures, it has at present no roads, banks, manufactures, or commercial establishments of any kind. Apply to such a country such energies as are applied to the development of new territories in the American Union, and what would be the result? Unhappily, there has been no scope for the experiment.

All these speculations must proceed on the assumption that Mexico enters upon a new period of her history, and enjoys the blessings of security and order under an effective and responsible government. Maximilian has been unable to establish such a government—Juarez, the chief expelled from power by the French, refused, as might naturally have been anticipated, to acquiesce in the new settlement. He could never have been expected to do so, if a chance were left him of doing otherwise. Why should he lay down his arms, instead of levying war, in brigand fashion, against the man in power? Why should he not fight against Maximilian, just as he would fight against Miramon or against anybody else, and just as Miramon or anybody else would fight against him?

Fighting against somebody had been the order of the day in Mexico for many a long year, and it was but keeping up the custom of the land. Far be it from us to assert that something like patriotism may not have been excited in Mexican breasts by foreign invasion, or that Juarez may not on the present occasion be sustained by a better spirit than that which animated Mexican factions against each other. Such may, perhaps, be the fact, but there is nothing known to make us credit it, nor anything visible on the surface of affairs beyond the ordinary course of Mexican contests. Maximilian, however, has not been strong enough to repress the brigandage by which he was opposed, while his responsibilities prevented him from resorting to the weapons of his adversaries. The result is the failure of his government to insure tranquillity.

Matamoras, a view of which we give to our readers, is a river port town of Tamaulipas, in Mexico, on the right bank of the Rio Bravo del Norte, forty miles from the Gulf of Mexico. Its port on the gulf consists of two harbours—the Brazo del Santiago and the Boca del Rio, about nine miles apart, and both obstructed by bars impassable under the prevalence of strong winds.

BRITOMARTE, THE MAN-HATER.

By E. D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH,
Author of "Self-Made," "All Alone," &c. &c.

CHAPTER LXXXI.

Kind hearts there are, yet would the tenderest one
Have limits to its mercy; God has none.
And man's forgiveness may be true and sweet,
But yet he stoops to give it. More complete
Is love that lays forgiveness at thy feet,
And pleads with thee to raise it. "Only heaven
Means crouded, not humbled, when it says "Forgiven."

Adelaide Ann Proctor.

I TAKE up my story at a point of time some weeks later, when the unnatural and overstrained excitement of alternated joy and grief, triumph and despair, had in some measure subsided.

The parlour circle consisted only of Erminie, Elsie, Brigadier General Rosenthal, Colonel Fielding and Captain Hay.

Lieutenant Colonel Mim and Captain Ethel were frequent visitors.

Poor young Wing was supposed to have died, but it was noticeable that from the time General Rosenthal learned the liberation of Miss Conyers, he ceased to mourn the untimely fate of Wing.

No one knew where Britomarte was at this time.

Immediately after her release she had written three letters—one to Justin, announcing her safety, one to Erminie to the same effect, and one to the Signora Adriana di Bercelloni. And within a week after the posting of those letters she had left.

Lately she had written announcing her speedy return.

This letter, which was addressed to Justin, was immediately answered by a joint one from the brother and sister, entreating Britomarte to make the personage her home, and to let them know exactly by what train she would arrive, that they might meet her at the station.

They were now waiting her reply.

It was as yet early in the day, and the gentlemen had all walked out, and Elsie was busy at her favourite pastime of decorating the drawing-room with flowers, and Erminie having issued all her domestic orders for the day, was resting in an easy-chair in her own chamber, when the sound of wheels was heard turning into the gates and rolling up the avenue towards the front of the house. It was not an unusual sound, for there had been a great number of callers within the last few weeks, so that in fact the inmates of the cottage were getting tired of them.

Elsie, pausing in the act of arranging a bouquet, uttered an exclamation of disgust and wondered why people could not content themselves at home.

Erminie, seated in her easy-chair in the privacy of her own room, hoped that the visitor might be no one whom she should be obliged to see. And she waited for the appearance of the servant to announce the name of the new comer.

But fifteen or twenty minutes passed and no servant appeared, though the carriage still remained standing before the door.

"It is someone for Elsie," said Erminie to herself, as she sank in her chair to take her ease.

But at that moment she heard footstep approaching the chamber, and the next instant the door was thrown open by Elsie, who, pale and faint, tottered into the chamber and sank into the nearest seat.

"Elsie! Elsie, my dear! in the name of mercy, what has happened?" exclaimed Erminie, starting up in alarm, for the least terrible of her conjectures was that some serious accident had occurred to her own brother or to Elsie's father.

"Noth—nothing has happened! Nothing bad I mean! All good! Oh, Erminie! how shall I tell you!" gasped Elsie, bursting into a passion of hysterical sobs.

The excess of joy weeps; the excess of anguish laughs.

"What? what is this? Who came in the carriage?" breathlessly gasped Erminie, turning pale and cold, yet not with fear.

"Oh, Erminie, guess! I am afraid to tell you! I am afraid to tell you! Who would you rather see of all the world?" said Elsie, trembling.

Torrents of fire and of ice alternately seemed to sweep through the system of the delicate girl, as the blood rushed to her head and receded to her heart.

"My father! It is my dear father!" she cried, as she started up and dashed from the room.

"Yes! it is he!" said Elsie.

The drawing-room door stood wide open.

Erminie flew in and was folded in the arms of her father.

He sank down on the sofa and drew her on his lap; and she dropped her head upon his bosom and wept for joy.

And he clasped her in a closer embrace, and for the first few minutes not one word was spoken between them.

Then the first syllables her lips could frame were of gratitude.

"Thank heaven! Oh, thank heaven!" she said.

"Amen," solemnly responded the minister.

"My father! Oh, my beloved father!"

"My dear, dear child!"

"Let me look at you! Is it you indeed? Is it indeed you?" she said, raising her face from his bosom and pushing his head gently a little way from her that she might examine him at will.

"You see it is I," she said, smiling.

"But how thin you are! oh, how thin! how wasted your dear face is! Father, you have suffered!" she said, kissing him tenderly and repeatedly.

"But my sufferings are over now, dear child," he said.

"You have been all this while in a prison! And it will take time to restore you."

"Yes, my child, it will take as many weeks and as many new-laid eggs to build me up as it took to restore the knight of La Mancha after one of his campaigns," said the old man, gaily.

"You suffered so much in that prison! But don't try to tell me about it now," she added, hastily; "tell me what I shall do for you first. Have you had a good breakfast this morning? Shall I ring for Bob to bring you a pair of slippers and get a warm bath ready for you? Which first, dear father? Oh, I am not in my right senses! I am mad with joy, or I should know what to do at once without asking you. Let me take off your boots like I used to do!"

And she would have gone down on her knees to perform this service if he had not prevented her.

"Stay, my daughter. Sit where you are for the present, on my lap. I like you here. I want to look into your face; and I want nothing more just yet. Changed, my Minie! somewhat changed you are in these four years. Not so bright and blooming as you were; paler, thinner, but more lovely, my darling—much more lovely. Ah, I know how you have passed these years, my Minie. Even in my distant prison I heard of that young Sister whose tender mercies were over all sufferers that came under her care. I will tell you about that presently; but now tell me how knew you so readily that I had been in prison all this while? Who told you?"

"No one, my dear father. When I heard from Elsie that you had returned, I easily divined it. Where else should you have been living all this while, not to have come home to us? But besides that, dear father, several months ago—nearly a year ago, indeed—when my brain and nervous system were in an abnormal and exalted condition from the effects of illness and drugs, I had a dream, or vision, in which I saw you in prison."

"Dream? vision? My child, you surely do not attach any importance to such very natural phenomena?"

"I don't know, I will tell you all about my strange experience some day—not now. I will only say this now, that my dream left so strong an impression of your continued existence in this world, that I was more overjoyed than surprised when Elsie came to announce your return; and now that I see you before me, and hear you admit you were a captive confined in a prison, just as I dreamed you were, I cannot help attaching some significance to my dream."

"A mere coincidence, my little daughter. Millions of dreams amount to nothing. But if one in a billion seems prophetic from an accidental coincidence, it is immediately set down among supernatural phenomena. Nonsense, my Minie! The wonder is, not that one dream in a billion happens to coincide with something in real life, but that nearly all of them do not."

"So you have been a little Sister of Charity all this time my Minie!"

"Yes, my father; but there was really no merit in that. My heart would have broken else. I had to comfort others in order to sustain myself."

"Did you then suffer so much, my Minie?" tenderly inquired her father.

"Not more, not so much as many thousand women have suffered. But I believe that I was weaker than others, and more ready to succumb to sorrow, if I had not kept myself up in the way I did. First there came—but I will not talk to you of these things now. Father, dear father, you know—how much do you know about Justin?" she asked, after some embarrassment and hesitation.

"I know all about him, my dear child. I parted with him not an hour ago."

"My brother must have been tremulously astonished and overjoyed."

"He was, my darling. Justin is a stout man, and in the last four years he has grown stouter. But when he saw me he was nearer swooning than I ever saw a man in my life. He first arose to receive me, believing me to be a stranger, but when he recognized me, he turned white as death, reeled, caught the edge of the table for support, and fell back into his seat. It was a full minute before he could recover himself and welcome me. You sustained the shock with more firmness, my Minie."

"Because, dear father, it really was no such great shock to me. I say, as I said before, that my dream had prepared me for your return, and I was more overjoyed than surprised at it."

"Still 'harping' on your dream, my darling. Never mind that. You have suffered a great deal in this past time, my child."

"But I suffer no longer, dear father. I have you and I have Justin, and even my school friend, Britomarte, all safe. And I have not a sorrow in the world now," she said, gaily.

"Not one, my Minie?" he inquired, very significantly.

The fair, bright face was suddenly overclouded and darkened. The one unforgetable name arose to her lips. She covered her face with her hands, and burst into tears.

"I thought so, I thought so, my child. But I did not mean to torture you in vain. Hope, hope all things, my Minie," her father said, as he drew her closer to his heart, and soothed her gently.

Presently she raised her hand, and wiped the tears from her eyes, saying:

"How weak and foolish I am. How wrong and thankless to weep when I should only rejoice. And I do rejoice. Oh, my beloved father, I rejoice from the bottom of my heart, and thank heaven from the depths of my soul that you have returned to bless us with your precious presence. I do, dear father, I do!"

"I know you do, my darling, only you would be still more joyful and thankful if there could be one other by my side."

"Oh, my dear father," said Erminie, shrinking painfully, as one who had a wound suddenly probed—"my dear father, do not speak of that. Never mind me. Let us talk of yourself. Since you will not let me do anything for you but sit upon your knee, tell me, if it will not tire you to do so, how it came about that you were reported dead, and that a body was found and buried as your body?"

"It is a long story, my child, but I will try to tell it briefly. When my regiment was at —, it was desirable to ascertain the position of the enemy and the character of his defences. My colonel knew that the general officers were very solicitous upon this point. He thought secretly to procure the information, and to surprise them with it. He proposed to me to exchange my uniform for the clergyman's dress that I had a right to wear, and in that costume, and with a bundle of tracts in my carpet-bag, to penetrate the enemy's lines as an itinerant preacher, distributing my tracts, pick up all the information I could get, and then return to my regiment and give it to him."

"Oh, my dear father, what a dangerous service to put you on, and at your age, too!"

"My dear, we thought my age and clerical character might be the very circumstances to save me from suspicion."

"And so you went?"

"And so I went—myself and my colonel alone being in the secret! In my character of an old, itinerant preacher, I succeeded in getting within the enemy's lines, where I distributed my tracts among soldiers, and preached from the text, 'Come out from among them.' I gained 'golden opinions' and what is more, much important information in regard to the strength, position and plans of the enemy."

"But you were taken!" signed Erminie.

"I was taken! I started on my return, but some circumstances, of I know not what nature, excited suspicion. I was followed and arrested."

"Oh, my father! oh, my dear, dear father!" exclaimed Erminie, clasping her hands.

"My child, you see me here sitting in safety, you feel my arms around you, therefore you can bear to hear some hard facts. I will tell them as shortly and plainly as possible. The result of my arrest was that I was tried as a spy and condemned to die."

"Father! father!" exclaimed Erminie, clasping him closer, as though he were still in danger.

"Here I am, safe and well, little daughter! I owe my life to General Eastworth! His services were considered very great; his influence was almost unbounded. He recognized me as soon as he saw me, and without divulging my real name, which was not yet discovered, he intervened at the proper point of time, and got my death sentence commuted to that of imprisonment. I was sent to prison."

"And it was there I saw you in my dream," murmured Erminie, but in a voice too low to attract the attention of her father, who continued:

"I verily believe that Eastworth procured me to be sent where he could watch over me, and mitigate the rigour of my captivity, for he himself had just been ordered on duty in the same place; and he has served me like a son for more than three years."

"I am very glad to owe this deep debt of gratitude to General Eastworth," said Erminie, in a low voice.

"You will be gladder still to learn that Eastworth, like the Prodigal Son in the Scriptures, has come to himself!"

"Father! father! is this so? Is this really so?" gasped Erminie, in a low, breathless tone, as of suspended rapture.

"It is so, my girl, or I never would have brought up his name!"

"Oh, father! father! I never expected to be so happy in this world, or scarcely even in heaven, as you have made me with this news!" exclaimed Erminie, as a ray of almost divine joy shone through the tears that filled her eyes.

"I rejoice in your happiness, my darling child!"

"But how came this great change about, my father?"

"Who can tell that? Perhaps your tears that ever fell, your prayers that ever rose for him, were effective! The wisest and best of mortal men, Erminie, are subject to be hallucinated by some master passion. With one man it may be love; with another, jealousy, hatred, or revenge; with still another, avarice; and with the nobler sort of man it is, too often, ambition! With Eastworth it was ambition that warped his reason and silenced his conscience."

"But we have talked so much of him and so little of yourself, dear. How was it, precious father, that you never let me know that you were living?"

"My darling, the conditions of the commutation of my sentence from death to imprisonment were that I should hold no communication whatever with my friends. Even Eastworth, who did all in his power to mitigate the severity of my fate, could not aid me in evading these conditions, without a breach of trust. That was why I could not write to you."

"But I should have supposed some friend might have heard of your captivity and reported it."

"That was not likely. I was in a solitary cell, and confined under the name in which I had been arrested. No one but Eastworth knew my real name. And at my desire he kept it a secret. You heard me say just now, my dear, that the fame of the Little Sister of Charity, who ministered to the sick, had reached me even in my distant prison?"

"Yes, dear father."

"I will tell you how that was. I once had a guard that was so very kind to me, so extremely kind to me, that I one day asked him plainly why he was so. He answered that he had been in the hospital, and that a young lady had saved his life by her constant attentions to him, and by bringing him nice broths, jellies, fruits, wine, tea, and coffee, such as at that time, could not be furnished to the soldiers. Do you remember this case, Erminie?"

"Dear father, there were so many such cases! I don't remember this particular one."

"He remembers you. As long as he lives he will remember you! He talked to me about you. He described your looks and manners and tone of voice; he told me your name, and said that you had lost your father; he said that he should always be kind to the prisoners for your sake. I longed to tell him that I was your father; but I could not do so without disclosing my name, which I wished to keep a secret—which then more than ever I determined to keep a secret."

"But why, dear father?"

"Why? For your sake more than for any other reason, my Minie!"

"For my sake!"

"Ay, ay! listen! You had mourned me as dead. Time and religion had reconciled you to your loss,

and softened your sorrow. But suppose you had heard that I was living, and suffering a painful captivity in prison? Would not all your wounds have been torn open afresh, and kept open? Would not your heart have bled both day and night? Could you have done your daily duty in the hospitals with the image of your old father a captive in a prison ever present to your mind?"

"Oh, no, no, no!"

"Therefore, you see I was right in keeping the secret, and I kept it religiously. Why I did not hasten home immediately on being released from prison was this: I was seized with typhus fever. I was ill some weeks. A man of my age seldom recovers from typhus fever; and even when he does he takes a long time to rally. As soon as I was able to travel I set out for home. General Eastworth came with me, to take care of me."

"General Eastworth here!" she exclaimed, slightly starting, flushing, and paling.

"Yes, my Minie, and only waiting your permission to see him."

"Oh, how shall I meet him? How must I meet him, my father?"

"As your true heart dictates, my child."

She bowed her head and covered her face with her hands.

"Why do you weep, my Minie?" her father asked, tenderly caressing her.

"I do not know. My heart is heavy with its burden of happiness! Oh, my father, lay your hand upon my head and pray for me!—pray for me and bless me! I am weak, and tremble with my happiness! I am afraid—I am afraid to be so happy!"

And she shivered.

He smiled and laid his hand upon her head; he prayed for her and blessed her; then he stooped and kissed her, arose and placed her gently in the chair, and leaving her alone, stole silently from the room.

When Erminie looked up her father was gone, and her lover stood in his place.

Pale, silent, sorrowful, mutilated, General Eastworth stood there, looking down upon Erminie. Her hands flew out to meet him.

"Oh, welcome! welcome! welcome!" she exclaimed, with all her heart's warmth welling up in her words.

"You welcome me, Miss Rosenthal! You welcome me?" he whispered, in tones scarcely above his breath.

"With all my heart and soul! A thousand thousand welcomes!" she cried, with almost overpowering emotion.

"I come to you, Miss Rosenthal, to hear you confirm, if you will, the gracious words you spoke to me on your bed of illness near death, that night I came to your room at the risk of my life!"

"Then that was no dream! you were really beside me there?" she exclaimed, wondering.

"I was really beside you there. Did you doubt it?"

"I was so ill that night, I never could feel certain of what happened. And no one was able to assure me upon all points. But sit down! oh, sit! How pale you are! You are not fit to stand," she said.

"No, I am more fit to kneel to you," he answered, mournfully.

But she arose from the great arm-chair, and with gentle force compelled him to seat himself in it. Then she drew an ottoman forward and sat down at his knees, as she had been accustomed to do in the early days of their betrothal.

"I am so happy to have you here—oh, so unspeakably happy to have you here! I never hoped to be so happy in this world again!" she fervently exclaimed, as she placed her hand in his.

"What a welcome!" he said, as the tears rose to his eyes—his eyes that were all unused to such moisture. "What a welcome, and how unworthy I am to receive it! Do angels always welcome returning sinners, so, Erminie?"

"Please do not speak of yourself so to me; to anyone else you like, but not to me! I am your betrothed, and I will hear no ill of you, even from your own lips."

"No, no, Erminie! no, no, no, you angel girl! I have not come to bind again upon your young life bonds that were well broken years ago! I have forfeited all right to such great happiness! All that is changed!"

"But my heart is not changed," she murmured, in a low tone, and blushing deeply.

"My sweet child! when we were first betrothed I was twenty years older than you; although, being then in perfect health, I did not seem so. And my wealth was great, my social position high, and my name honoured. Since that time all is altered with me."

"But not with me; I am the same," she murmured.

"Look at me, Erminie! See what time, toil, care, grief, pain, and remorse have done for me. I am old, gray, broken, and mutilated," he said.

"But I love you," she replied.

"To-day I am a poor and penniless man."

"But I love you," she replied.

"And see—I am maimed! I have lost my right arm!"

"Poor right arm! I would I could give mine to restore it," she said.

"And oh, Erminie! my once spotless name is stained with reproach. Could you bear to wear it?"

"Yes, for I love you! Oh, my dearest! I have but that one little phrase to answer all your words—'I love you!' Oh, my betrothed, I love you!"

He caught her in his arm, he strained her to his bosom, he burst into tears and wept over her as only a strong man can weep.

"And oh!" he cried, "what shall I render unto heaven for all its loving kindness and tender mercy in giving me this dear woman's heart?"

"For only heaven

Means crowned, not humbled, when it says 'forgiven'."

So these two were reconciled, and this was but the forerunner of a deeper and broader reconciliation yet to come.

General Eastworth, by the earnest invitation of Dr. Rosenthal, remained as a guest at the parsonage.

At five o'clock in the afternoon Justin came in, accompanied by Miss and Ethel, and a very pleasant dinner-party closed the day.

It was very noticeable that Elsie, who had now nearly completed her first year of mourning, received young Ethel's attentions with less of reserve than formerly.

Colonel Fielding certainly smiled on the young naval officer's suit.

Beyond my real esteem and admiration of the young fellow, and apart from my interest in my daughter's happiness and well-being, I have really a selfish motive for wishing to promote this marriage," the colonel said in explanation to Dr. Rosenthal.

"And what may that be?" smiled the doctor.

"Why, as Elsie is my only child, I naturally feel a very great reluctance to part with her. And as Ethel will be at sea more than two-thirds of the time, Elsie will be left with me. There! Am I a selfish old dog? I cannot help it! The old widowed father of an only daughter is very apt to be so," said the colonel.

The morning succeeding the domiciliation of General Eastworth at the parsonage, Erminie received a telegram from Britomarte, announcing that she would arrive by the seven p.m. train.

And at the appointed hour Justin and Erminie went to the station to meet her.

The train was up to time, and Britomarte was soon fondly received by the brother and sister, who took her at once to their hearts and home.

(To be continued.)

ACCIDENTS IN COAL-MINES.—It should never be forgotten that nearly one thousand lives are annually lost in the collieries of Great Britain. It nevertheless appears, according to Mr. George Senior, that there has been a diminution of accidents in coal-mines since the appointment of Government inspectors. He stated before the British Association, that under the operation of the Mining Acts fatal accidents from explosion had fallen from 114 per 100,000 men employed to 57; that accidents from falling coal had fallen from 171 to 150; accidents in shafts from 100 to 54, and accidents from miscellaneous causes from 100 to 94. He adduced statistics to show the magnitude and importance of the subject. There were 307,542 men and boys employed in and about collieries, and the quantity of coal produced was 95,000,000 tons annually. The extent of coal excavated was equal to about thirty miles square, 5 ft. thick. One life was lost in every 354, and the life lost was one to 110,000 tons.

PRIMITIVE BEEHIVE.—The following mode of keeping bees has been practised in India for a long period, and is said to be very successful:—As honey forms a favourite article of food among the Himalaya highlanders, they have a very extensive sale for it; it is, therefore, with them a great article of internal commerce—in fact, the staple of their bazaars, where it always finds a ready vent. They obtain the honey without destroying the bees, by means of a hollow cylinder of wood enclosed in the wall of their huts, on the side most sheltered from the weather, and in which there is an opening without for the bees to enter. In the centre of this hive there is a moveable division, which is kept open while the bees are making their honey; but as soon as the combs are full, the busy family is driven out by a noise made through the inward extremity. As soon as they have retreated, the central partition is closed, and the combs are drawn out of the cylinder from the opening on the inner wall. The honey being secured, the hive is again opened and the bees commence their interminable labours of reproduction.

THE trade in roses, as is well known, is of considerable importance in France. Rose-trees are cultivated in different parts of the country in open fields, just as turnips or cabbages. Thus, there are 500,000 rose-trees near Orleans, 200,000 near Metz, 1,000,000 near Angers, 1,500,000 near Lyons, 2,000,000 near Paris, and 2,000,000 in the thirteen communes of Brie-Comte Robert. The varieties called Rose-The, the Bourbon, and Mousseuse, flourish particularly in the environs of Paris and Orleans.

MOUNTAIN SILK OF NORTH CHINA.

MR. CONSUL MEADOWS, whose consular district includes Manchuria and Eastern Mongolia, reports that mountain silk remains as yet the one article which the district is likely to furnish to England.

There are two crops of the mountain cocoon, a spring and autumn; the autumn much the largest, but the spring greatly superior in quality. In the autumn the cocoons intended for the spring crop are placed in baskets, which are hung up in Chinese dwelling-rooms facing the south, but still having a temperature in the greater part of the winter considerably below freezing-point.

The natural heat of spring suffices to bring the chrysalis out of the cocoon in the butterfly state. The butterflies then couple, eggs are produced in four or five days, and are laid on paper spread upon mats and tables. In a few days each egg produces a very small black worm, which is nourished by young oak leaves that are gathered and scattered over the paper. After some days the worms are transferred to the oak bushes on the hill slopes. After its first sleep or torpor of a couple of days, the worm becomes green in colour and larger in size. For its fifth sleep it prepares by spinning itself into a cocoon, in which it assumes the chrysalis shape.

When the worm begins to make its cocoon, it selects two or more oak leaves, more or less facing each other, and joins them together by a network of the silk thread which keeps issuing from its mouth as it moves its head from the one leaf to the other, holding on by its back claws to the twig from which the leaves grow. When the leaves are sufficiently joined to form a sort of cup or basket under the twig, the worm drops into the receptacle it has thus formed first quite surrounds itself with the loose, flossy-like silk which forms the outer portion of the cocoon as they come to market, and then proceeds to thicken the inner surface by farther thread-spinning, till its bulk is sufficiently decreased for its turning into the chrysalis shape.

The best silk is produced by nourishing the worm on the leaves not of the oak, but of the "Tseu-to-taze," which exists, however, only in small quantities. The chrysalids which are not kept for breeding are used by the Chinese as an article of food.

Not a tenth of the hillsides suitable for the oak bushes are at present planted with them; but considering the quantity of silk already produced, it may be taken that the trade could be developed into one of appreciable importance even for our great manufacturing interests, unless exactions and jealousies of the local mandarins interposed to repress it.

We recommend this silkworm to the attention of the Acclimatisation Society. Surely it might be naturalized in this country with advantage.

THE project of Messrs. Hemans and Hassard to supply London with water from the lake districts would cost about £12,000,000 for 250,000,000 gallons daily.

MR. SCOTT, photographer, Union Street, Edinburgh, has just taken a carte-de-visite of three sisters and one brother in one carte, and the united ages of the four amount to 339 years. Two sisters (twins) are 84, the man is 91, and the other sister is about 80, making the above number of years.

In the absence of "metal more attractive," some sensation has been created at Paris by a report that the famous cannon of the Palais Royal, which goes off at twelve o'clock from the heat of the sun when it reaches the meridian, was to be taken away. The report is not true, but some improvements have been made in conformity with the advance of scientific knowledge. It is the fashion for people to regulate their watches by this cannon, although it is a fallacy to suppose that it marks the time accurately. For instance, it is in the month of February, when there is the greatest difference between the real mid-day, as indicated by the cannon, and the mean mid-day, as marked by the clocks of the city. In this month of September the clocks point to nearly a quarter past twelve when the mid-day cannon of the Palais Royal goes off. It is only on the 15th of April that the clocks and the cannon are in perfect accord. On the 20th of October the difference will be more than a quarter of an hour, and on the 16th of November, should the sun shine, the clock will be more than a

quarter of an hour behind the cannon. Such, at least, is the calculation of a gentleman connected with the Board of Longitude. A pleasant anecdote is told illustrative of the rage of regulating watches by the Palais Royal clock. A gentleman, who came out of the Théâtre Français one night about half-past eleven, saw a friend waiting very anxiously in the gallery near the cannon. He asked his friend what he possibly could be doing there at that unseasonable hour. "Why," said the gentleman, "I am waiting to hear the cannon go off in order to regulate my watch."

KENMORE.

CHAPTER I.

TOWARDS the close of day a man stood upon the shore of Loch Tay, one of the most beautiful and picturesque sheets of water in Scotland, gazing at times over the towering summit of Ben Lawers, where the clouds were rolling up in great black masses, and soon upon a small boat that was struggling with the rising wind near the middle of the lake.

The man was young—not more than five-and-twenty—of medium height, and finely proportioned, possessing a face of rare beauty, a rich profusion of light brown curlis escaping from beneath the rim of his cap; while his eyes, though of the softest and warmest shade of blue, betrayed a capacity of quick fire and earnest determination, as well as of deep feeling and sympathetic emotion.

He was dressed in the ordinary garb of a gentleman of that period, though the short cloak of fine black cloth, secured at the throat by a jewelled brooch, and the blue velvet cap, with its white ostrich feather, were not exactly after the pattern of those usually worn by the gentry of the Scottish court.

The pomel of the sword which hung upon his hip—a globe of burnished steel surmounted by a cross of gold—and the peculiar fashion of the spurs which graced the heels on his russet boots, told very plainly that he had been admitted to the order of knighthood which William the Conqueror had instituted in England, and which Malcolm Canmore had received and introduced into Scotland.

Close by his side, with the loose rein drawn over his arm, stood a richly caparisoned Norman charger, while at no great distance was a second horse, bearing a broad pack-saddle, upon which was strapped a large leather sack that evidently contained the knight's luggage; and that our knight had travelled a goodly distance on that day might be safely judged from the dust upon his garments, and from the sweat that lay in white ridges and flakes upon the sides and limbs of his horses.

The scenery from this point was grand and imposing, and the traveller had probably at first dismounted to enjoy the view while his horses had been slaking their thirst.

Just over the water, upon the opposite shore of the lake, arose from wild and rugged masses the dizzy height of Ben Lawers; to the southward, beyond the grim forest of Finglan, other mountains reared their summits; to the northward, and not far distant, upon a beautiful islet, arose the ivy-clad walls of the Priory of St. Agatha; while to the eastward of that, lifting its gray towers above the intervening wood, were to be seen the battlements of Kenmore Castle.

The day had been remarkably pleasant; but as the afternoon wore away a high wind arose, and dark clouds gathered over the mountains; and the knight, after his horses had drunk their fill, had been upon the point of remounting, evidently desirous to escape the threatened storm, when his attention had been arrested by the boat before referred to.

It was a small, light skiff, with a single sail, and contained only one inmate.

The prow was pointed towards the shore upon which our traveller stood, and was plunging through the water at a rapid rate.

"The man is crazy!" muttered the knight, throwing the rein from his arm, and taking a step nearer to the water's edge. "He should take in that sail. Mercy! his boat will be run completely under! He must be a boy to keep that sheet fast! And the wind is rising, too! Don't he see it! Ha!—"

This last exclamation had been called forth by observing that the inmate of the boat had left the helm and gone to bailing water with his cap.

The light bark was sinking lower and lower, and very soon the gunwales were completely under water. The short mast swayed to and fro as the prow was driven under; the boatman started to his feet and raised his arms aloft; and in a few moments more the skiff was completely swallowed up.

There was not a moment to be lost.

The boat, even should it float upon its side, could afford no safe resting-place for the unfortunate adventurer, as it would be swept by the furious waves; and

if he was not a strong man he could not swim to the shore.

The knight moved very quickly, but yet calmly and methodically. First he threw the saddle from his charger, and then removed the burden from his pack-horse; having done which he vaulted to the back of the former, and with the rein of the latter in his hand, he urged them into the water. For a moment the horses hesitated; but the cheering voice of their master finally prevailed, and when they had once started to obey there was no more hesitation. It was hard work, for the horses were swimming against the wind, and the waves broke over them at every stroke; but the knight held them in the right direction, and inspired them with something of his own zeal.

The boatman had seen the horses as they entered the water, and when he found that they were coming towards him, he struck out to meet them.

The knight observed the movement, and with all his energy of force and persuasion he urged his horses onward.

They struggled nobly against the furious wind and waves—struggled as if they knew there was a life to be saved—and ere long they were close upon the unfortunate.

"Hello! Hello-o-o-o! Take this horse. Can you grasp the rein?"

The adventurer made no reply, but he struggled on, and soon had the rein in his hand. He clung there a moment to regain his breath, and then climbed upon the animal's back.

"Are you strong enough to hold your seat?"

"Yes, good sir." The voice was very weak, and the reins had dropped from his nerveless grasp.

"Fear not," added the knight. "Keep your balance, and the horse will bear you safely."

Once headed towards the shore, with the wind and the waves behind them, the horses sped steadily and surely on, until at length they stood upon the dry land.

The knight slipped quickly from his seat, and assisted his companion to dismount, having done which, he allowed the tired animals to move up to the greenward, where they might rest, and then he turned to take a look at the individual whom he had saved.

He was a youth, not more than twenty years of age, slight and fragile of frame, with pale, thin cheeks, large dark brown eyes, and the long, wavy hair, now that it was wet, having the hue of a raven's back. The face, entirely free from any sign of beard, was one of peculiar boyish beauty, the hands were as small and delicate as a girl's, and the dripping garments, both in fabric and fashion, bespoke the child of wealth and station.

"Well, well," said the knight, lightly and cheerily, "you have had quite an adventure. I doubt if many men have enjoyed what you have enjoyed this day—a boat ride and a horseback ride, at the same bout, upon Loch Tay."

The youth tried to smile, but the effort was fruitless.

"Not much enjoyment," he returned, with a sober shake of the head. "The boat ride came near costing me my life, and if the horseback ride yields pleasure, it must be in the boundless gratitude I shall ever owe to thee, my preserver."

"I think my good pack-horse did afford thee a saving help, young sir, and for what part I bore in the business I accept thy thanks, but talk not of too much gratitude. I should be but a poor knight if I could not save a suffering fellow's life, when all the cost to me was but a little determined exertion."

"Ah, you are a knight, then?" And as the youth spoke, a slight flush appeared upon his pale cheek, and he gazed upon the stalwart, vigorous form before him with a longing, envying look.

"By the grace of our good king, Edgar, I am," replied the traveller. "But before we talk more, you had better find a seat, for it strikes me that you are not feeling very strong just at this time. We will wait here for a few moments—just long enough to allow my horses to breathe—and then we will be moving."

The youth took a seat a little higher up on the bank, when the knight proceeded:

"You are not much used to handling a boat alone?"

"You are mistaken, sir knight. For several years that has been my chief delight. I am not strong enough to join in the chase, nor can I do much with heavy arms, but I can handle the light bow with skill, and I can guide my boat well enough. Perhaps you think I was careless to carry my sail with so much wind, but when I tell you that my boat was leaking badly, and that the leak was worse I could not stop it, you may understand why I left my sail up."

"Ah," said the knight, "I see it now. I did think it strange that you should carry such sail, but if your boat was leaking, perhaps you did wisely. A leaky boat is not a very safe thing."

"That boat was almost a new one, sir, and how it could have sprung a leak where it did is beyond my comprehension. I do not like to believe that anyone could have wilfully injured my boat, and yet I am forced to that conclusion. I may be wrong. I hope I am."

"Mercy!" cried the knight, "you do not think it could have been the work of an enemy?"

"No, no—I certainly have no enemies." But the tone and the manner expressed the hope rather than the assurance.

"Your home is not far away?"

"No. We can see the turrets of the castle from here."

"Then you reside at Kenmore?"

"Yes."

"You are the son of Atholbane?"

"Yes. My name is Edwin."

"Then, fair sir, we are well met; for my destination is Kenmore Castle. My name is Aldred."

"And art thou he whom men call the Knight of Lanark?"

The knight signified by an inclination of the head that he was.

"I have heard of you," exclaimed Edwin, with enthusiasm. "You rode the tilt at Scoupe against Northumberland."

Another inclination of the head gave answer to this. "And you have come to attend the tournament that is to be held at Kenmore?"

Another silent affirmative.

"Oh, I am glad of that. I wish you——"

"What do you wish?" asked Aldred, after waiting some moments to see if the youth would finish the sentence.

Presently Edwin looked up, and after a little further thought, he answered:

"I was thinking that it would be grand if you could bear lance against Thorwald; but perhaps I ought not to say so."

"Thorwald is your brother?"

"No, no," cried the boy, his pale face flushing once more. "He is not wholly my brother. His mother was my mother; but the blood of my father runs not in his veins. I am the only son of the Earl of Kenmore. But—if you are the Knight of Lanark, you know Earl Douglas."

"I was reared within the walls of his castle, and I think I know him very well."

There was no touch of pride in the knight's tone as he spoke these words; but there was a perceptible tinge of bitterness; and presently he sought to turn the conversation by asking his companion if he did not think they had better start on their way to the castle. But Edwin took no notice of this divergence.

"My mother, you know, is the Lady Margaret," he said, and she is sister to Earl Douglas. Thorwald was son of her first husband, Eric of St. Philips, a Norman noble of the household of William the Conqueror. Though Thorwald's mother is my mother, yet he is neither Scot nor Saxon. He is tall, and dark, and proud, like the Normans, and he loves to boast. None of the knights of Edgar's household have yet been able to keep their saddles against him. Oh, if you could only ride him down!" And Edwin clapped his hands like an eager, excited boy.

"We will see about that in due time," returned Aldred, with a smile. And then he added, somewhat seriously: "But suppose your half-brother should ride me down."

The boy did not for a moment admit the necessity of any such supposition.

"I don't know why it is," he said, looking boldly and frankly up into the knight's face; "but I like you."

"You jump at conclusions quickly," laughed Aldred.

"Because I read them in your face, Sir Aldred. I never yet knew a face that lied to me. I have seen faces that I could not read; but I do not believe I ever read one falsely. I should not fear to trust you as a brother. You are brave and true. I never saw you before; but I know you well enough to know just how you will be received at the castle. My half-brother will not like you."

"Why think ye that?"

"Because braggarts never like those who are better than themselves. My mother will not be apt to love you, because you are——"

"Never mind your mother," interrupted Aldred. "How do you think your father will receive me?"

"He will love you," answered Edwin, quickly and warmly. "He is a good man. But perhaps you know him?"

"I saw him at Lanark some years ago, but he would not remember me. I was only a page then, in attendance upon Earl Douglas. But come, my horses have regained their breath, and we had better be on our way, for the storm is close at hand. If your father gives me welcome, I care little for Thorwald."

Thus speaking the knight arose, and having saddled

his Norman horse, he proceeded to replace the heavy pack upon the back of the other.

"I would leave this pack behind, and come for it in the morning," he said, after he had strapped it in its place, "but it contains my armour, and my heavy sword, and I care not to have it lay in the rain all night. However, the horse is strong, and you are not heavy; so, if you will allow me to help you up, we will be off."

The knight lifted the youth to the elevated seat as he would have lifted a little child, so light and frail was the burden; and when he had assured himself that his charge would ride safely, he mounted his own horse, and started on.

"There is my father!" cried Edwin, as they emerged from the wood and came in full sight of the castle. "He is coming in search of me."

Aldred recognized the earl the moment he saw him—a man of powerful frame and stately mien, a little past the middle age, with a face noble and frank, and sitting in his saddle with the ease and grace of an accomplished knight. Atholbane drew up his horse as he recognized his son, but before he could speak, Edwin had slipped down from his high perch and ran to his father's side.

"My dear boy," said the earl, placing his hand affectionately upon his son's head; "I am glad to see you safe. I had become a little uneasy."

"I am safe and sound," cried the youth, cheerily; "but before I tell you what an adventure I have had I must make you acquainted with Sir Aldred of Lanark. He was on his way to our castle when he met me, and you must welcome him and love him for my sake."

The Earl turned to our hero and extended his hand.

"Sir Aldred," he said, "you are welcome to Kenmore; and as I know you to be a brave knight, I doubt not that we shall find it a pleasure as well as a duty to make your stay with us agreeable to yourself." He spoke with honest feeling, and the generous flush upon his face showed that the words came from the heart.

Aldred made response gratefully and modestly, and Edwin, who had been watching their countenances very narrowly, seemed well pleased with the result, for he had read in the face of his father the love he had desired, and in the face of the youthful knight he had seen plainly the signs of reverence and respect.

But that was not the time nor the place for extended conversation. The storm was already upon the mountains, and Atholbane proposed that they should make the best of their way to the castle; and having lifted his son to his own saddle-bow, he started homeward.

On the way Edwin told the story of his adventure—of his great danger—and of the manner in which Aldred had saved him; so that before they reached their destination, the father's heart had warmed towards his guest with a love that was not to be weakened.

Kenmore Castle was an elaborate structure for the times. It was upon a gentle eminence near to the lake, with a moat and bridge; a barbican, well advanced and strongly fortified; a gate-house; thick, high walls, with proper bastions; a capacious court, with outer and inner baileys, in the latter of which was a strong donjon, with a well and a chapel. The drawbridge was down and the gates open as the party advanced, and they did not pull up until they had reached the landing-steps of the inner bailey, where grooms were quickly at hand to care for the horses.

And they had not reached the castle a moment too soon, for just as they stepped within the vestibule the wind came with a wild rush, and great drops of rain beat down upon the pavement.

In one of the drawing-rooms a bright fire was burning upon the broad hearth, and thither the earl conducted his guest, where they were soon joined by the countess.

Lady Margaret, Countess of Kenmore, was a tall, stately woman, some four or five years older than her husband, her hair thickly sprinkled with silver, and her angular features betraying the workings of a disposition not always of the most pleasant kind; but she could be polite and agreeable when she chose, and on the present occasion she welcomed the Knight of Lanark with much apparent warmth. She had known him when a boy, and she told him she was glad he had come to Kenmore.

"How is the earl, my brother?" she asked after they had taken seats.

"I left him well," replied Aldred—"he and all his household."

"And the Lady Clara," pursued the Countess; "what of her?"

"She is well." There was a change in the knight's tone, and a momentary deepening of the colour of his cheeks as he answered this question, and the countess

seemed to notice it, as she was evidently watching his face very narrowly.

"Oh, I forgot!" cried Edwin, who had taken a seat by Aldred's side. "You know my Cousin Clara, don't you?"

For an instant the colour deepened again on the knight's cheek, and there was a perceptible quivering of the delicate muscles that controlled the movements of the eye; but the emotion was quickly controlled, and with a pleasant smile he answered:

"Yes, Edwin, I know her very well. We have lived under the same roof from childhood."

"And is she as pretty as they say?"

"She is very pretty."

"And is she good?"

"In my poor judgment," said Aldred, with calm sincerity, "she is goodness personified."

Edwin was upon the point of making some further remark upon the same subject, when his mother interrupted him by a commanding look and gesture, upon which he shrank back and held his peace.

Shortly afterwards a page entered and announced that supper was ready, and the countess, with stately grace, conducted the guest from the drawing-room.

CHAPTER II.

AFTER supper, as the Knight of Lanark walked out into the hall in company with the earl and Edwin, a middle-aged man, whose garments were dripping with wet, came in from the vestibule.

"Ah, Walter, is this you?" demanded Atholbane.

"It is I, my lord," replied the man, bowing as he spoke.

"And what brings you across the water in this storm?"

"Ah, good faith, my lord, the sight of your son alive and on his legs gives answer to my chief inquiry. Some of our nuns saw his danger from the upper windows of the priory, and Lady Helena would have sent me to the rescue had we not seen the gallant horseman give the needed relief. It was a bold and timely act."

The man gazed inquiringly at our hero as he spoke the last words, seeing which, the earl added:

"You speak truly, good Walter; and I have the pleasure of introducing to you Sir Aldred of Lanark, the man who saved my son."

"Sir knight," the host continued, turning to his guest, "this is Walter, the steward of St. Agatha—a good man and true. His is a peaceful calling, but you will find his friendship worth possessing and preserving."

The steward first bowed his acknowledgment to the earl, and then grasped the extended hand of the knight.

"I like a brave man," he said, with blunt frankness, "and I know I shall like you. And the Lady Helena sends you her greeting of thanks, and she will remember both you and Master Edwin in her prayers."

"Lady Helena," explained the earl, "is the Prioress of St. Agatha."

"I have heard of her," said Aldred, "as a most kind and exemplary woman; and even to the borders of Scotland the Christian charities of the Sisters of St. Agatha are known. You will return to her my thanks, and give her assurance that the humble Knight of Lanark, while his reason remains, will not forget the duty he owes to those who suffer."

As the old steward turned away, Edwin followed him into the vestibule, where he told over again the story of his rescue.

"Oh, Walter," he cried, with childish enthusiasm, "I know Lady Helena would love the noble knight, and I wish he could visit the priory with me. Do you think the good lady would object?"

"I don't know," replied Walter, with a shake of the head. "The prioress does not often admit strangers within the walls of St. Agatha."

"I know she does not admit them into the cloister, but perhaps she would let us come into your apartment. There are rooms for guests, you know."

"Yes, there are rooms for guests, but since Lady Helena has been prioress very few guests have been there. Still she may wish to see your friend. I will ask her."

After Walter had gone, Edwin went up into the highest apartment of the donjon, where he stood within one of the barbican's, looking out upon the storm until night had fairly set in.

In the meantime, the earl and his guest had seated themselves in the drawing-room, where they conversed until a late hour upon such subjects as would naturally suggest themselves to two men who were warmly attached to the interests of the Scottish crown.

Finally Atholbane, with a few words of excuse, arose and left the room, and after an absence of half-an-hour or more, he returned with something of a cloud upon his brow.

(To be continued.)

A LIVERPOOL gentleman, who has searched the Scriptures diligently, has discovered a prophecy to the effect that England is to be invaded by the Emperor Napoleon during the present year. He has set forth his views in a pamphlet entitled, *The Invasion of England and Fall of the Emperor Napoleon, as Predicted by the Prophet Ezekiel*.

FACETIAE.

AN IRISH paper advertises:—"Wanted an able-bodied man as a washer-woman."

LOVE OF A SHREW.—The love of a cross woman, it is said, is stronger than the love of any other female individual. Like vinegar, the affections of a high-minded woman never spoil. It's the sweet wine that becomes muddled, not the sour wine.

IRISH SCHOOLBOYS.

The master put the rather small class in attendance through a very fair lesson of Biblical knowledge, and then proceeded to display some of the practical instruction which had been given to his pupils.

"Now, boys," he said, "you know Donnybrook fair?"

"Yes, sir: we do."

Every hand was up.

"Is it right to go to Donnybrook fair?"

"No, sir: it is not."

"What is it?"

"It's a sin, sir."

"Very well, boys," said the master.

Turning to his English visitor, the teacher remarked: "You see, sir, that we do not neglect to inculcate practical precepts as well as religious opinions."

"Ah! yes," replied the visitor: "very true. But may I be allowed to put a question to the boys myself?"

"Oh! certainly, sir: whatever you please."

"Well, then, boys, tell me honestly—every boy who has been to Donnybrook this year hold up his hand."

Up went every hand in the class. Of course, the boys being Irish, they saw the intensity of the joke, and laughed accordingly; and the master being of the same nation, was not more backward, in spite of defeat; and visitor, teacher, and scholars joined in a good hearty roar, which had hardly calmed down when a little gamin of the class stepped forward, put up his hand, and said, "Please, sir, I went to Donnybrook to distribute *tracts*!"

As the idea of any urchin going to Donnybrook to distribute tracts, or coming alive out of it if he did, was utterly incredible, the laugh broke out again with renewed violence, and the visitor took his departure.

AN ITALIAN nobleman, boasting the other day of the quantity of game he had on his *bene* (estate) in the province, said, "I have great quantities of partridge, woodcock, wild-boar, wolves, and about 50 brigands."

ALL SOUND.—"I tell you," said a warm friend of a newly elected M.P. to an old, sober politician, "your party may say what they please, but cannot deny that Mr. B.—is a sound man." "That's just what we are afraid on," replied old beeswax; "it's our opinion that he's *all sound*!"

A BORE.

"I want to see some of your gimlets," said a greenhorn one day as he entered a hardware store.

The dealer took down several parcels, neither of which suited.

"Well, then, what kind do you want? here is almost every variety."

"Why, I want them what bores square holes."

A PRADOGUE was about to flog a pupil for having said he was a fool, when the boy cried out, "Oh, don't! I won't call you so any more! I'll never say what I think, again, in all the days of my life."

TRUTH WILL OUT.—"Well, Master Jackson," said a minister, walking homewards after service with an industrious labourer, who was a constant attendant; "well, Master Jackson, Sunday must be a blessed day of rest for you, who work so hard all the week. And you make good use of the day, for you are always to be seen at church." "Ay, sir," replied Jackson, "it is indeed a blessed day; I work hard enough all the week, and then I come to church on Sundays, and sets me down, and lays my legs up, and thinks of nothing."

TO COOK A HUSBAND.—Many good husbands are spoiled in cooking; some women keep them in hot water constantly, while others freeze them by conjugal edleness; some smother them in hatred, contention, and variance, and some keep them in a pickle all their lives. These women always serve them up with tongue sauce. Now it cannot be supposed that husbands will be tender and good if managed in this way; but, on the contrary, very delicious when

managed as follows:—Get a large jar, called the jar of faithfulness (all good wives keep one on hand), put your husband into it, and set him near the fire of conjugal love; let the fire be pretty hot, but especially let it be clear, and, above all the rest, be constant; cover him with affection, kindness, and subjection, garnished with modest, becoming familiarity, and spiced with pleasantness, and if you add kisses and other confectionaries, let them be accompanied with a sufficient portion of secrecy, mixed with prudence and moderation. We would advise all good wives to try this recipe, and realize what an admirable dish a husband makes when properly cooked.

STEREOSCOPIC.

FREDERICK FITZMORTIMER: Something for you, my dear.

EMILY JANE: Why, it's a box. I don't want to get into a box.

FREDERICK: Yes, you do—into this one—this is a Stereoscope.

EMILY JANE: What's a Stereoscope?

FREDERICK: It's merely a new contrivance for making two things one.

EMILY: Isn't that delightful—let's try it right away.

A MAN has been sued for £2,000 for a breach of promise. His defence is, and it ought to clear him, that he was ready to marry her last winter, but she kept putting it off, and as she weighed 285 pounds, he prefers not to marry her during the warm weather.

ROBBED OUTWITTED.

A short time since an Irishman left Copperopolis, California, for San Andreas, with his carpet sack on his shoulder, and when about five miles on his way was met by a "road agent" (the name given in California to highway robbers), who demanded his money. Pat immediately dropped his pack on the ground and sat down on it, and thus addressed the man:

"Yez must be very thick along this road; I've only come five miles this morning, and this is the fourth time I've been stopped and axed for money."

"Is that so?" asked the highwayman.

"By me soul, it's the truth," replied Pat.

"Well, then, you had better proceed on your way; it wouldn't pay to 'go through you' now."

Pat shouldered his carpet-bag, and they were about to separate, when he turned round and said:

"Have you ever such a thing about ye as a match to light me pipe wid?"

He was supplied with one, and the two separated. The Irishman had five hundred dollars in gold coin in his bundle, and by this piece of shrewdness saved his money.

VERY LIKE.—An Irishman recently stopped at an hotel, where pretty high bills were charged. In the morning the landlord made the amount of damages and presented it to Pat. After he had glanced over it, the latter looked the landlord in the face and exclaimed, "Ye put me in mind of a snipe." "Why?" asked the landlord. "Because you're very nigh all bill."

A COLOURED STATEMENT.—Facts should always be stated in black and white. Anything written in red ink of course appears ink-red-ible.—Fun.

CONSIDERATE.—We once knew a city man who never got up till twelve at noon, because, he said, it was only fair, as day broke in the morning, to give it a chance of redeeming its position before beginning business with it.—Fun.

IN CASE HE BE KNIGHTED.—Mr. Baker having been made a K.C.B. should retire from active life, and rest on his laurels if he values his health. It is knight-work that shortens the lives of so many bakers.—Fun.

CITY NEWS.—A gentleman, who has lost considerably during the recent panic, says that he cannot understand why speculations in the money mart are called money-tarry transactions, for he finds the money generally goes.—Fun.

SERIOUS WORK ON BREACH-LOADERS.—*The Neede Gun*; or, Bismarck's Call to the Unconverted.—Fun.

INCURABLE.—There's a man in Middlesex with such a bad memory that he constantly forgets himself.—Punch.

BEAR AND EAGLE.—According to a telegram which arrived the other day from St. Petersburg, at a farewell banquet lately given at that capital in honour of the United States Embassy, Prince Gortschakoff made a speech wherein he expressed his confidence in the permanent duration of a good understanding between North America and Russia, and said, in addition:—"This good understanding is neither a danger nor a menace to other nations, and is dictated neither by ambitions or covert designs." Of course the Prince made this declaration with profound gravity. If a Russian dinner is always a *diner à la Russie*, at which the guests are served by attendants, of course the

American Ambassador had no opportunity of saying, "Shall I help you to Turkey?" and enabling the Russian diplomatist to reply, "Thank you—perhaps you would like to take Canada."—Punch.

A LUCID EXPLANATION.

Said Angelina to her Edwin, as they looked through an old glee book, "Edwin, dearest, pray what is the meaning of the line:

"Unnumbered surges grace the foaming coast?"
Serge, you know, is woollen stuff, like my bathing-dress, you know. But one don't spell it with a 'u,' you know."

Said Edwin, "I'm sure I don't know. 'P'raps it's a missp. Fellow very likely wrote it at Ramsgate. Tried to count the bathers there, but found he couldn't do it."—Punch.

SCIENCE.

IT is found that of the dry substance of the egg 40 per cent. is pure fat.

IN France it was observed that one-fourth more rain falls in wooded than in non-wooded districts.

THE manufacture of the wire for the Atlantic cable kept nearly 250 hands employed for eleven months; over 30,000 miles were supplied.

THE curvature of the earth amounts to seven inches per mile. A man six feet high cannot be seen from a distance of ten miles.

PROFESSOR NEWTON, the eminent astronomer, of Yale College, Connecticut, informs us that on the night of the 13th and 14th November next we shall have showers of meteors.

THE steel bells which have been put up in the Protestant church of St. Antoine, at Fribourg, have a fine full sound, and it is thought that bells of this metal will offer a serious competition with those of bronze now used, but which cost much more.

MANUFACTURE OF WHITE-LEAD.

MR. SPENCE has recently patented in France a method of making white-lead, which consists in dissolving the oxide or the carbonate of lead by the employment of an alkalized caustic solution such as caustic soda. The oxide or carbonate of lead, or substances which contain them, are reduced to powder and mixed with the solution of caustic soda. It is not necessary that this solution should be hot. After it has been dissolved, a fresh supply is added until all the carbonate of lead in the powdered substance is dissolved.

The patentee affirms that all minerals which can be calcined, or by other methods, be converted into an oxide or carbonate of lead, or which contain a considerable portion of this carbonate, can be used for the manufacture. They are calcined at a low temperature, in an ordinary reverberatory furnace, or in any other convenient furnace. These substances are then heated till the lead glances is completely calcined, but avoiding its reduction to lead metal. The galena is converted partly into oxide of lead and partly into sulphate of lead. Before mixing these products with the caustic solution, they should be submitted to the action of a solution of soda ash; but if the calcined galena, or the mineral containing it, also contains oxide of copper, or a large quantity of oxide of zinc, these latter can be dissolved by a solution of caustic soda.

The ammonical solutions of carbonate of ammonia, or of carbonate of soda, do not dissolve the oxide of lead; they simply eliminate the sulphuric acid or the sulphate of lead. If the minerals or other substances only contain a small quantity of oxide of zinc, and if their solution by the caustic soda and their precipitation with the carbonate of lead are not considered prejudicial, it is then preferable to employ a solution of carbonate of soda to eliminate the sulphuric acid.

The soda or ammonical solution being withdrawn and washed with water, the substance containing the calcined galena is then filtered in order to be mixed with a solution of caustic soda. Having thus obtained, from all these minerals or substances containing the oxide or carbonate of lead, by the mixture just spoken of, a liquid containing oxide of lead in solution, it is allowed to stand until perfectly clear, and then placed in several vases into which can be easily injected a continuous current of carbonic acid gas by means of pipes pierced by many small holes.

The carbonic acid gas combines with the soda and the oxide of lead, and as soon as the soda is carbonized the gas unites with the oxide of lead, and is precipitated as a pure white substance, composed partly of oxide and partly of carbonate of lead. As soon as it is seen that the precipitation of the oxide is no longer continued, the injection of gas is stopped, and it is then that the white-lead is deposited. The solution becomes carbonate of soda, is separated, and after having been submitted to the action of caustic of lime

it is again ready to act upon the substances containing—as has been shown above—oxide or carbonate of lead.

For the precipitation of this oxide of lead, the carbonic acid gas that the patentee employs can be obtained either by the action of hydrochloric acid on lime or on carbonate of lime, as well as by the combustion of coke or wood charcoal, or in any other convenient manner. It is, however, necessary that there should be no sulphurated hydrogen in the carbonic acid employed.

Carbonate of ammonia or bi-carbonate of soda, or any of the soluble carbonates, can be used for the precipitation of white-lead; nevertheless, Mr. Spence prefers carbonic acid gas as being the most economical. The solution of soda employed with the calcined galena should be replaced after a certain time, when it is converted into sulphate of soda. The ammoniacal solutions can be separated from the copper and zinc by the recognized methods. The solution of soda can be employed afresh. It is only necessary to be made caustic by quicklime, after the precipitation, and before it is used again, to dissolve the oxide of lead.

The white-lead which is precipitated should be washed in pure water, and afterwards dried before being used.

If a drop of nitro-glycerine is let fall on a plate of cast-iron which has been warmed, it quickly evaporates. If the plate has been heated to redness it burns without noise, like a grain of powder; but if the plate, without being red-hot, is at a temperature which causes the nitro-glycerine to boil immediately, the drop is suddenly decomposed with a violent detonation.

The huge Horsfall gun, made at the Mersey Steel and Iron Company's works in 1856, and presented to Government, is now lying under the heavy sheers at the Royal Arsenal wharf at Woolwich for transport, it is stated, to Tilbury Fort, to protect the entrance of the river. The gun is well known from the place it took in target practice at Shoeburyness. It is a solid forging of wrought-iron, bored out.

DEPTH OF THE SEA.—A French journal says that the soundings for the new transatlantic cable have enabled comparisons to be made of the depths of the different seas. Generally speaking, they are not of any great depth in the neighbourhood of continents; thus, the Baltic, between Germany and Sweden, is only 120 feet deep; and the Adriatic between Venice and Trieste, 130 feet. The greatest depth of the channel between France and England does not exceed 300 feet, while to the south-west of Ireland, where the sea is open, the depth is more than 2,000 feet. The seas to the south of Europe are much deeper than those in the interior. In the narrowest part of the Straits of Gibraltar the depth is only 1,000 feet, while a little more to the east it is 3,000 feet. On the coast of Spain the depth is nearly 6,000 feet. At 250 miles south of Nantucket (south of Cape Cod) no bottom was found at 7,000 feet. The greatest depths of all are to be met with in the Southern Ocean. To the west of the Cape of Good Hope 16,000 feet have been measured, and to the west of St. Helena 27,000. Dr. Young estimates the average depth of the Atlantic at 25,000 feet, and of the Pacific at 20,000 feet.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

JAPAN FOR LEATHER.—1. Boiled linseed oil, one gallon; burnt umber, eight ounces; asphaltum, three ounces; boil, and add oil of turpentine to dilute to a proper consistency. 2. Boiled oil, one gallon; the black of Prussian blue to colour. Prussian blue, when heated, turns of a black colour; thus the black japanned cloth, used for table-covers, is prepared by painting the cloth with Prussian blue and boiled oil, and then drying it by the heat of the stove, when in the drying it takes its intense colour.

A RECIPE FOR WINTER SALAD.—For a winter salad: Take some fresh, crisp, and blanched lettuce, also endive and colery, wash very well and cut up, not too small, into the salad-bowl, and after that slices of good red beet root upon the top, and a hard-boiled egg sliced. Immediately before the hour of dinner pour over the whole the following dressing: Take one teaspoonful of salt, two ditto of mixed mustard, one ditto of Harvey sauce, one ditto of anchovy, the yolks of two fresh eggs; stir well together; then add three tablespoonfuls of salad oil, and keep stirring it well; then add three tablespoonfuls of thick cream; still keep stirring; then three tablespoonfuls of good vinegar, and stir all well together.

JELLY OF SIBERIAN CRABS.—This fruit makes a jelly of a beautiful colour, and of pleasant flavour also; it may be stored in small moulds of ornamental shape, and turned out for dessert. Take off the stalks, weigh and wash the Siberian crab, then to each pound and a half add a pint of water, and boil them gently until

they are broken, but do not allow them to fall to a pulp; pour the whole into a jelly bag, and when the juice is quite transparent weigh it, put it into a clean preserving-pan, boil it quickly for fifteen minutes, take it from the fire, and stir in it until dissolved three-quarters of a pound of fine sugar, roughly powdered, to each pound of the juice; boil the jelly from fifteen to twenty minutes, skim it very clean, and pour it into the moulds. Should the quantity be large, a few additional minutes' boiling must be given to the juice before the sugar is added.

WOMAN'S LIFE.

I KISSED her in the eve of May,
As on her mother's breast she lay:
Her breath was sweet as new-mown hay;
A baby, in whose blessed eyes
Still lingered, as in soft surprise,
Some recollections of the skies.

I saw her, as, with dancing hopes,
She clambered up the morning slopes—
Her young neck like an antelope's;
A child, whose life was like the play
Of fountains, that, with sunny spray,
Make music all the livelong day.

When summer's amber grain was mown
Around the golden harvest throne,
I saw her girl with virgin zone;
But, through the autumn's ruddy round,
She walked, in wifely graces bound,
With motherhood supremely crown'd!

And in the pleasant morns of May
A babe upon her bosom lay:
Its breath was sweet as new-mown hay.
Thus Woman's holiest life she learns:
From Innocence to Love it years—
From Love to Innocence returns!

A. J. H.

GEMS.

It is most silly to be proud of our person, birth, or the riches of our relations. Worth constitutes true greatness.

We cannot practise deceit without that deliberation of purpose which constitutes the very essence of vice.

A good heart is the sun and moon, or rather the sun, and not the moon; for it shines bright and never changes, but keeps its course truly.

It is often better to have a great deal of harm to happen than a little; a great deal may rouse you to remove what a little will only accustom you to endure.

It is utterly impossible for the best men to please the whole world, and the sooner this is understood, and a position taken in view of this fact, the better. Do right, though you have enemies.

LUCK lies in bed, and wishes the postman would bring him news of a legacy. Labour turns out at six o'clock, and with busy pen or ringing hammer, lays the foundation of a competence.

ALWAYS mistrust a man who overloads you with professions of friendship upon a first acquaintance; depend upon it he has some design upon your vanity, if nothing more. Nine times in ten it is better to be an icicle than an enthusiast, for it is easier to thaw than it is to freeze.

THE THANKFUL HEART.—If one should give me a dish of sand, and tell me there were particles of iron in it, I might look for them with my eyes, and search for them with my clumsy fingers, and be unable to detect them; but let me take a magnet and sweep through it, and how would it draw to itself the almost invisible particles by the mere power of attraction. The unthankful heart, like my finger in the sand, discovers no mercies; but let the thankful heart sweep through the day, and as the magnet finds the iron, so it will find in every hour some heavenly blessings.

ONE very curious circumstance has been noticed in connection with the Jewish population of the East End. They chiefly reside in a most unsavoury, and, at first sight, unhealthy locality. Unhealthy, indeed, it has proved to the Gentiles dwelling within its bounds, but the Jewish inhabitants—even of the very poorest and lowest class—have miraculously escaped, only three or four cases of cholera having taken place among them, while the cases of diarrhoea have hardly exceeded those of an ordinary summer. A similar immunity was noticed in '49, when the Hebrew population of Whitechapel lost about 1 in 2,000 as compared with 6 in 1,000 of the general population of the same district, and 29 in 1,000 of the Christians of Rotherhithe. This may be ascribed to certain habits

and observances of their faith. For instance, all Jews cleanse their houses thoroughly at least once a year, and every room is lime-washed at least as often; more than one family never occupy the same room, while a very different state of things prevails among their neighbours; considerable care is used as to the quality of the food, tainted provisions being proscribed and all flesh meats being inspected by the priest prior to being consumed, and the poorer members of the community are liberally cared for through the benevolence of the rich, application for workhouse relief being forbidden; they abjure pork. We ought to draw some lesson from this, especially when we are told that the Irish in London, whose habits are in every way antagonistic to those of the Jews, have suffered from cholera more than any other of its inhabitants. So the Roman Catholics suffer more than the Jews, and we presume this will settle the question of religion with which his Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury in his prayer seemed to connect it, and to assure us that it was a punishment for our being in this age supremely wicked and immoral, a statement which we deny in *toto* as far as the laity are concerned.

STATISTICS.

WOMEN EMPLOYED IN THE MANUFACTURES.—In the United Kingdom they may be numbered as a total of 802,900, of which the principal sections are as follow:—Cotton manufacture, 259,074; woollen, 99,304; silk and ribbon, 71,527; lace, 45,107; straw, 44,228; gloves, 22,271; hose, 21,453; earthenware, 11,934; and in nail making, 10,761.

THE QUANTITIES OF THE VARIOUS GUMS LANDED DURING 1866 TO THE 30TH OF JUNE LAST, AS COMPARED WITH THE SAME TIME LAST YEAR, HAVE BEEN AS FOLLOWS:—Animi and copal, 3,638 packages, against 3,160 packages; ammonia, 187 packages, against 23 packages; Arabic, 657 packages, against 1,148 packages; assafetida, 149 packages, against 152 packages; myrrh, 24 chests, against 43 chests; olibanum, 1,054 chests, against 1,399 chests; Benjamin, 693 chests, against 401 chests; and gamboge, 35 chests, against 72 chests.

MISCELLANEOUS.

WHITENED WHEAT.—IT IS STATED THAT A LARGE QUANTITY OF THE WHITING MANUFACTURED AT THE CHALK QUARRIES ON THE BANK OF THE THAMES IS EXPORTED TO AMERICA TO BE RETURNED MIXED WITH FLOUR.

AN IMPORTANT CONGRESS OF WORKING MEN FROM FRANCE, GREAT BRITAIN, BELGIUM, GERMANY, AND SWITZERLAND, IS SITTING AT GENEVA, CONVENED BY THE INTERNATIONAL WORKING MEN'S ASSOCIATION HITHERTO SITTING IN LONDON.

TWO STATUES, THOSE OF HAMPDEN AND LORD CLARENCE, IN THE NEW HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT, AND EACH OF WHICH COST THE COUNTRY £500, HAVE BEEN SO WANTONLY DAMAGED THAT AN EXTRA NUMBER OF POLICEMEN HAVE TO BE STATIONED TO PREVENT A REPETITION OF THE OFFENCE.

AN ENORMOUS TURTLE WAS CAUGHT RECENTLY ON THE HUNTER, ON THE FLATS NEAR TOMAGO. IT MEASURED 7 FT. IN LENGTH, AND WEIGHED ABOUT 700 LB. A STILL LARGER ONE HAS SINCE BEEN FOUND IN THE HARBOUR OF NEWCASTLE.

ON THE NEW COINAGE NOW BEING STRUCK AT THE MINT OF BERLIN, THE KING'S HEAD IS SURROUNDED WITH A LAUREL WREATH—A DECORATION NOT TO BE FOUND ON PRUSSIAN COINS SINCE THE DAYS OF FREDERICK THE GREAT.

THE GENTLEMEN—AMONGST THEM MR. KEITH JOHNSON—ENGAGED IN EXPLORATIONS IN PALESTINE, HAVE DISCOVERED THE ANCIENT TEMPLE OF CAPERNUM IN AN ADMIRABLE STATE OF PRESERVATION. THIS WAS ONE OF THE BUILDINGS INTO WHICH JESUS ENTERED, AND THE ONLY ONE NOW EXISTING WHICH CAN BE SO IDENTIFIED.

BY A SINGULAR COINCIDENCE THE SUMMER OF 1766 EXACTLY RESEMBLED THAT OF THE PRESENT YEAR. LORD CHESTERFIELD WRITING TO HIS SON ON THE 1ST OF AUGUST, 1766, SAID:—"THERE HAS BEEN NO SUMMER SO WET AS THIS WITHIN THE MEMORY OF MAN. SINCE MARCH WE HAVE NOT HAD ONE SINGLE DAY WITHOUT RAIN."

A VERY EXTENSIVE LODGE IS SOON TO BE ERECTED AT THE WEST END OF LOCH MUICK, FOR THE USE OF HER MAJESTY. THE BUILDING WILL BE OF ASHLAR WORK, GRANITE BEING THE STONE EMPLOYED. AN EXCELLENT SITE HAS BEEN CHOSEN FOR THE LODGE, FROM WHICH A MAGNIFICENT VIEW OF THE SURROUNDING PICTURESQUE SCENERY WILL BE OBTAINED.

IT IS STATED, BUT WE SHOULD IMAGINE THAT IT MUST BE AN EXAGGERATION, THAT THE ELECTION IN GREAT GRIMSBY, IN 1790, LASTED NINE MONTHS! WITH PUBLIC HOUSES OPEN THE WHOLE TIME; THAT THE EXPENDITURE ON BOTH SIDES WAS £80,000, AND THAT IT KILLED OFF ONE-FOURTH OF THE ELECTORS! THIS BEATS YARMOUTH, REIGATE, TOTNES, AND LANCASTER ALL IN ONE!

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

DIOGENES.—Pronounced diogenes.

F. U.—Umbrellas were unknown in Glasgow till 1782.
F. Y. M.—Upwards of 2,000 different kinds of nails are made.

MELINA VERNON.—The translation of the word *donateur* is "a donor, or giver."

W. G.—Farthings are not a legal tender to the amount of twenty shillings.

JOHNSON.—Her Majesty's father, the Duke of Kent, died January 23, 1820.

A STUDENT.—The British Museum was first opened in 1759.

PADDY.—You are right. The union of Great Britain and Ireland took place in 1801.

C. M., blue eyes, auburn hair, about the middle height, and inclined to be stout; would prefer a fair man.

NELLY AND PATTY.—"Nelly," dark hair, blue eyes, and fresh colour; "Patty," brown hair and blue eyes.

SIDNEY HARRINGTON, twenty-two, 5 ft. 5 in., dark hair, good looking, with 100/- a year.

HERBERT TRAMPER, twenty-three, 5 ft. 9 in., good looking and with 120/- a year.

J. C. and H. C., both twenty-one, and in good circumstances. Respondents must not be above twenty-three.

H., twenty, dark hair, good teeth, very industrious, and in a good situation.

M. E. STOCKPORT.—We make no charge for the insertion of communications from correspondents. Write to us as you see others do.

HOUSE OF SECRETS.—A woman legally divorced should assume her maiden name, and in that name be married again.

NO NAME.—In the year 1857 the Emperor and Empress of the French visited Queen Victoria at Osborne. During 1858 Her Majesty visited Germany. 2. You are wrong.

DOHA LOWKELL, seventeen, petite, auburn hair, hazel eyes, and of good family. Respondent must be about twenty-one, and in a good position, but money is no object.

THE TIGER.—Why not apply to the manufacturer of whom you purchased the blacking? Obviously he would be the proper person to advise you.

HENRY TALBOT, an artist, twenty, 5 ft. 5 or 6 in., and not bad looking. Respondent must be of good birth, young, pretty, accomplished, and fond of poetry and painting.

ARTHUR STANLEY, twenty-one, 6 ft., fair, light hair, blue eyes, and good-looking. The lady must be between eighteen and nineteen, amiable and pretty.

S. T. R., twenty, 5 ft. 3 in. in height, but does not lay claim to great beauty. Respondent need not be rich or good looking, but kind, fond of home, and of good education.

A. M. and E. M.—"A. M.," seventeen, and "E. M.," nineteen, good looking, and thoroughly domesticated. Respondents must be steady and fond of home.

A SCOTCHMAN.—Your national hero, Sir William Wallace, after being treacherously betrayed into the power of King Edward by one of his own countrymen, was beheaded in London, by order of the king, August 23, 1305.

WERNER A., twenty, dark hair, gray eyes, medium height, rather stout, good tempered, and very steady. Respondent must be very dark, of medium height, and good tempered.

LARA.—You really must refer to your LONDON READER. We have answered the question so frequently, and recently also, that it would not be fair to other correspondents to repeat it.

LIZZIE, ANNIE, and POLLY.—"Lizzie," nineteen, tall, fair, and hazel eyes. "Annie," twenty, light hair, blue eyes, and middle height. "Polly," twenty-five, dark hair, dark blue eyes, and rather tall.

S. E. D.—It is spelt ventriloquism, not venteloquism. Primarily, it is a gift of nature, and therefore not to be acquired, although those who do possess the gift may improve it by art and practice.

OLIVIA.—Boiling water poured on some sage leaves, and placed for a time in the oven, then strained and applied to the roots of the hair daily, will thicken it and prevent its turning gray.

KATE and BELLA.—"Kate," medium height, fair, blue eyes, thoroughly domesticated, well educated, and fond of music. "Bella," good looking, medium height, auburn hair, blue eyes, clear complexion. Respondents must be dark.

CHARITY.—A good soup for benevolent purposes may be made as follows: An ox-chest, any pieces of trimmings of beef, which may be bought very cheaply (say 4 lb.), a few boules, any pot-liquor the larder may furnish, 1/2 pack of onions, 6 leeks, a large bunch of herbs, 1 lb. of celeri (the

outside pieces, or green tops, do very well); 1 lb. of carrots, 1 lb. of turnips, 1/2 lb. of coarse brown sugar, 1 pint of beer, 4 lb. of common rice or pearl-barley, 1 lb. of salt, 1 oz. of black pepper, a few bread raspings, 10 gallons of water. The average cost will be 1/- per quart.

WALTER, twenty-six, 6 ft. fair, slender, not bad looking, and in a respectable position under government. Respondent must be good tempered, good looking, and have a little money.

A LOVER OF BOTANY.—The term *Calyx*, or flower cap, is the external covering which protects the bud before it expands. It is divided into several parts, resembling small leaves both in form and colour. The corolla is the coloured part of the flower.

ALGERNON.—The names of the twelve Cæsars were as follows: Julius Caesar, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian.

CAROLUS.—The meaning of Heptateuch is the first seven books of the Old Testament, which comprises the Pentateuch, or five books of Moses, and those of Joshua and Judges.

M. W. N. R., and A. H.—"M. W." a blonde, medium height, amiable, and fascinating. "N. R." a brunette, tall, considered fine looking. "A. H." petite, dark hair, and black eyes. Each has 1,000/- in her own right. Respondents must be kind and affectionate.

L. A. has done a very imprudent thing in marrying without her parents' consent. The best thing she can do, by way of atonement, is to at once candidly make open confession, when most probably all will be well. Do this at once, and fear naught.

EUGENIA.—1. We must beg our fair correspondent to look through the correspondence pages of her LONDON READER, and she will find her questions answered at length. 2. Cannot "Eugenia" tell how many numbers we have published by a reference to our last issue?

HAVE A KIND WORD FOR ALL.

Have a kind word for those
Whose misfortunes and woes
Have darkened their pathway in life,
And with words of sweet cheer
Make the earth to appear
A realm that is free from all strife.
Have a kind word for all,
And let no smiles of love fall,
Though sorrows and dangers are rife.

Have a kind word for one
Who has battened and won
In conflicts that mortals must fight,
Have a kind smile in store
For the poor at your door,
Who struggle through sorrow's dark night.
Have a kind word for all
Till the reaper's last call
Is heard from the blest land of light! D. S.

TWENTY-NINE, daughter of respectable parents, with a brother in the ministry, herself a teacher. Respondent must be of Christian principles and respectable position.

G. S. G.—An average size walnut-tree yields about thirty gun stocks. Those cut from the heart of the tree are the most valued. About one stock in six can be obtained "all heart"; the remainder are "sap and heart" and "sap."

CHARLOTTE and EMILY.—"Charlotte," eighteen, short, dark, inclined to be *embouilloté*, of a loving disposition, and fond of home. "Emily," eighteen, tall, fair, fond of company, but not afraid of domestic work, and also inclined to *embouilloté*. Respondents must be tall.

MEDICAL STUDENT.—The priory and hospital of St Bartholomew, in Smithfield, was founded by Royel, or Rathers, the king's minstrel, in the third year of Henry I. (1102). He was the first prior of his own establishment, and presided over it to the time of his death.

A READER.—Nature printing is the technical name given to a process by which copies of plants and other objects are produced upon paper in a manner so truthful that their size, fabric, and colour are represented even to the most minute detail.

STONNY.—It is true that from very simple causes names are created. For instance, a man of the name of Feyerston, settling among the Germans, his name became changed to Fuerstein, which in English means Flint; thus the family name became Flint. A descendant settling on the coast of the Mississippi, the name was again translated into Pierre-a-Flu, and from that into Peter gun.

W. C.—The continued use of your arm should in itself strengthen the muscles. The stiffness and weakness you complain of may arise from a sprain or constitutional cause. Opopanax is a good remedy in some instances, but why not consult a medical man immediately? The surgeon of the day at any hospital would give you the necessary advice and the liniment required, gratis.

W. X. E.—Thirty years ago pens were sold wholesale at 2/- per gross, and now they are sold as low as 1/- or 1/- per gross. When it is remembered that each gross requires 144 pieces of steel to go through at least twelve processes, the fact that 144 pens can be sold for 1/- is a good example of the results attainable by the division of labour and mechanical skill.

W. X. E.—"George," 5 ft. 10 in., and dark, with neither money nor expectations (handwriting very bad). "Edwin King," tall, dark, and gentlemanly, but no money. "G. S.," 5 ft. 9 in. in height, dark brown hair and eyes, good-looking, kind disposition, and fond of music. "Edwin M.," twenty-five, 5 ft. 5 in. in height, hazel eyes, dark brown hair, whiskers, and moustache, and passionately fond of music. "E. M." does not care about her money, as he has a respectable profession and comfortable salary, also capital prospects on the death of an aged relative. "Alphonse," forty, medium height, pleasant looking, 40/- per annum, good-natured, has travelled much, and quite gentlemanly; and "Yeo," a builder, with some property, thirty-two, 5 ft. 8 in. in height, dark hair, with whiskers and moustache, dark eyes, with a strong partiality for all those pursuits which strengthen the physical and mental constitution.

ing facts submitted by the Author of nature to the cognizance of our faculties; therefore, as it has science and philosophy for its basis, it cannot be said to be founded on empiricism.

STANHOPE, eighteen, tall, fair, long curly, blue eyes, and has an income of 1,000. Respondent must be tall, twenty-three, and musically disposed.

HANOMITING.—"Violet," very nice, and ladylike—"Lady of the Lake." Very good for a school girl of fourteen, still there is room for great improvement—"A. M. M." Not at all good; requires much practice—"Lizzie." Very good; but next time pray write upon notepaper. To address us, or indeed any person, upon a waste slip, certainly betrays either a want of politeness or at least thoughtlessness.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

Ensign is responded to by—"Kitty," twenty, dark hair and eyes, and good looking—"Marion," tall, rather dark, gray eyes, and a happy disposition—"Annie Alice," who would be most happy to accompany him to New Zealand, has blue eyes, brown wavy hair, and is of medium height—"L. Y." twenty-four, not accomplished, but well informed, and domesticated. "L. Y." would be most happy to accompany "Ernest" to New Zealand, provided she likes him on farther acquaintance. "L. Y." is accustomed to colonial life, having resided some years in Australia—"Minnie Ashton," not pretty, understands the management of a farm-house, and would like to go to New Zealand—"Faithful," twenty-nine, dark hair and eyes, medium height, has been brought up amongst the sheep-farms of the moors, and understands the dairy, but is now teacher in a school in London, and has some distant relations in New Zealand; and—"Amy," who would willingly go to New Zealand or anywhere else with him.

Eoward by—"May," nineteen, fair, slight, pretty, and rather below the middle height. M. Dousis by—"Cora," twenty, tall, with dark curly hair, and a teacher in a ladies' seminary. H. J. B. by—"Minnie," affectionate, with a loving heart, and fond of music. J. A. R. by—"R. J. C." tall, and dark. F. P. Rogers by—"H. E. G." tall, dark, ladylike, well connected and educated, thoroughly domesticated, and fond of home, but no fortune.

Jevons by—"Annie F." seventeen, light brown hair, not bad looking, and of a very affectionate disposition; and—"Edith A." seventeen, rather short, very fair, quiet and amiable.

ALBERT STEEL by—"Sunshine," seventeen, rather tall, and domesticated. (Hair, a pretty brown.)

Bexton by—"J. C." twenty-two, good looking, fairly educated, and understands housekeeping—"Lida," twenty-four, cheerful disposition, and domesticated—"G. J. S." twenty-two, medium height, domesticated, and would do all in her power to make him happy—"Lizzie T." rather below the medium height, bright dark eyes, a good figure, a good disposition, and very warm hearted; and—"V. D." twenty-two, tall, fair, good looking, domesticated, no money, but would make a true and loving wife.

Kevin Stock by—"Mary Frank," eighteen, medium height, golden brown hair, and dark blue eyes.

LOVISON, EMILY by—"Presumptuous," seventeen, tall, dark, good looking, is a chemist, and will have sufficient to start himself in a good business when out of his time.

VIOLET by—"E. F." 5 ft. 8 in., dark hair and whiskers, good temper, has travelled a great deal, and now wishes to settle in England, has an income of 450/-; and—"J. G. F." twenty-three, dark, and considered very good-looking.

EORT by—"Frank Midway," who would like to hear from her.

E. C. Stock by—"Mary Frank," eighteen, medium height, golden brown hair, and dark blue eyes.

ELIZA ADA by—"Neptune," twenty-two, 5 ft. 10 in., and has an income of 1,000/- per annum.

FANNY BLANCHE D. by—"Washington," twenty-one, 5 ft. 8 in., and has an income of 1,000/-.

HEARTSKAPE by—"L. S." twenty-three, 5 ft. 10 in., dark, regular features, fond of all out-door pursuits, especially riding, has house and grounds of his own situated in the country, and 350/- a year. "L. S." would think himself perfectly happy if only "Heartskape" would consent to be mistress over all.

J. A. K. by—"M. A. W." nineteen, tall, fair, jet black hair, and a nice little income of 500/- per year.

FLORA by—"J. S." twenty-four, a medical man in good practice, medium height, dark hair and eyes, good looking, highly respectable connected, and has an income of 600/- per annum.

EVELYN MESS by—"Pat Mollony," twenty-six, tall, good looking, well educated, and has a business house of his own (ironmonger).

KATE SWANER by—"George," 5 ft. 10 in., and dark, with neither money nor expectations (handwriting very bad). "Edwin King," tall, dark, and gentlemanly, but no money. "G. S.," 5 ft. 9 in. in height, dark brown hair and eyes, good-looking, kind disposition, and fond of music. "Edwin M.," twenty-five, 5 ft. 5 in. in height, hazel eyes, dark brown hair, whiskers, and moustache, and passionately fond of music. "E. M." does not care about her money, as he has a respectable profession and comfortable salary, also capital prospects on the death of an aged relative. "Alphonse," forty, medium height, pleasant looking, 40/- per annum, good-natured, has travelled much, and quite gentlemanly; and "Yeo," a builder, with some property, thirty-two, 5 ft. 8 in. in height, dark hair, with whiskers and moustache, dark eyes, with a strong partiality for all those pursuits which strengthen the physical and mental constitution.

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